

**Parkdale United Church
429 Parkdale Ave
Ottawa K1Y 1H3**

**Community of Faith Profile
Living Faith Story**

October 2024

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VISION

We are a community of followers of Jesus, working to transform our community and our world.

OUR MISSION

Parkdale's congregation will respond to God's call by:

- a) **Worshipping** together in a joyful act of praise and gratitude, for inspiration and guidance
- b) **Learning** the Christian way of life through Biblical literacy
- c) **Supporting** one another and others in need
- d) **Working** towards justice for all people and for the earth
- e) **Praying** for guidance, wisdom, and support.

OUR VALUES

As a community of faith, we strive to live out the following values:

Compassion

- a) We are a caring Christian community that supports the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of others
- b) We help to meet the needs of our local and world communities
- c) We nurture and support our ministry personnel, staff, and lay leaders

Respect

- a) We treat everyone involved in our ministries with fairness, equity, and respect
- b) We strive to involve all participants in our congregation in the decisions that affect them
- c) We seek opportunities to collaborate with other Christians and persons of other faiths
- d) We commit to the healing of the earth
- e) We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional, unceded, unsundered territory of the Algonquin nation, and are grateful for their stewardship of this territory for thousands of years.
- f) We welcome all, celebrating diversity, inclusion and equity with regard to race, colour, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and ability.

Working Together

- a) We believe that what we achieve together is stronger and has more impact than our individual efforts
- b) We value the talents, experience, and passion of all who participate in our ministries
- c) We recognize the value of collaboration and actively nurturing partnerships

Commitment

- a) We listen and learn, as we endeavour to improve the quality of our ministries
- b) We support our ministries with our time, talents, and financial resources
- c) We provide a safe, secure environment for our ministries
- d) We strive to make everyone welcome in our congregation
- e) We seek to be a blessing to the neighbourhood in which we live

INTRODUCTION

Parkdale United Church is a vibrant and healthy congregation, located on the western edge of downtown Ottawa. In 2023, there were approximately 443 people on the Parkdale rolls with 297 members and 146 adherents. Average Sunday attendance in the first six months of 2024 was approximately 168, with highs of 370 on Martin Luther King Sunday and 355 on Easter, which were not included in the calculation of the average. Parkdale has been blessed over the years with a strong ministerial and lay staff and a committed group of volunteers. The past year has seen an influx of new members, many of them young families with children. The Sunday School often welcomes approximately 40 children each week, and there are thriving junior and senior youth groups and a young adults group.

The neighbourhood at the corner of Parkdale and Gladstone in Ottawa includes seniors' residences, social service agencies including services for seniors, immigration agencies, small shops, a library, elementary school and a Salvation Army transition house. In recent years, the Hintonburg community has seen considerable revitalization, with new condominiums, a new seniors' residence and continual renewal of the shops on Wellington Street, making it an up-and-coming and desirable place to live. This has led to an actively changing neighbourhood, with gentrification seriously affecting low-income families and people dealing with poverty and homelessness through a significant loss of affordable housing.

WHAT DRAWS US TO PARKDALE?

To worship

- Worship is important to us and is a reason we gather. We have strong scripturally based preaching, and special services for baptisms, confirmation, Martin Luther King Sunday, celebrations and remembrances.
- Education is a key component of our worship as we learn about the scriptures, context and understanding.
- Parkdale is seen as a place to grow spiritually.
- Parkdale has a part time Music and Worship Arts Director, and enjoys a senior choir, children's choir and a praise group. In addition, a community orchestra, the Parkdale Orchestra, adds to worship 2-3 times per year.
- Our worship services are live streamed and experienced in person.
- Children's worship is incorporated into the Sunday service, followed by a vibrant and engaging Sunday School program

To reach out

- Outreach is important to Parkdale.
- We have a Mission, Outreach and Justice Committee. The MO&J Committee is concerned with human and social issues existing in our community and abroad and strives to bring awareness of these issues to our church family and promotes opportunities for the congregation to participate actively in outreach and justice initiatives. The committee supports the Ministerial staff to advocate against homelessness, poverty, hunger, racism and injustices of all kinds.

- We’ve hosted and sponsored several refugee families.
- The Benevolent Fund provides much needed support to local individuals.
- Our *In From The Cold* program serves weekly meals and fellowship from November to April each year.
- Rummage sales provide low-cost household goods and clothing to community members.
- A one week Vacation Bible School in the summer is an opportunity for children to come to Parkdale and experience community.
- Members of the ministerial staff have been active in several local organizations providing leadership education and support (e.g. Ottawa Food Bank, The Mission, etc).
- The Property Development Working Group (referenced elsewhere in this profile) has reached out to neighbours and community groups as it deliberated on recommendations for significant changes to the aging church building.

To give and receive hospitality

- Friendship and fellowship are traditionally provided through activities throughout the year within the church community, with cultural celebrations, pancake suppers, potlucks, international dinners, barbecues, the Christmas Bazaar, 2 online auctions, and 2 rummage sales. Volunteers on a rotational basis serve coffee & tea after church and during the summer months, lemonade is offered. An occasional youth-run café serves refreshments after church worship.
- Volunteer opportunities are available for serving meals, friendly visiting and prayer support.
- In From the Cold provides hospitality, meals, entertainment and companionship to community members at a weekly meal through the winter months.
- Small groups provide access to community needs – prayer shawls, caring kitchen for emergency meals.
- Community groups, such as AA and dance groups, use the building
- Queensway Pre-school, a subsidized early enrichment program for young children, is hosted in the Parkdale building
- Family Camps once per year are an opportunity to enjoy time together.
- A weekend women’s retreat, also held once per year, provides an enriching time for women to get together
- Images and Stories is a monthly program that highlights an identified speaker’s experiences to be shared with others (e.g. travel, cultural experiences)

MINISTRY RESOURCES

Parkdale is blessed by a ministry team of strong pastoral leaders. From 1999 we had a full-time Co-ordinating Minister, who retired in September 2024. We also have a full time Congregational Designated Minister for Youth and Young Families, serving since 2020, who has recently been approved as a Candidate for ordination and is carrying out her Supervised Ministry Education at Parkdale. Finally, we have a half-time Designated Lay Minister for Pastoral Care, who has been serving at Parkdale since 2022.

The Ministers work as a team, leading worship together on Sundays and supporting each other in their individual portfolios.

LEADERSHIP

Parkdale Church Council is made up of 20 members, including the Chairs of all committees, other designated positions such as Chair, Treasurer and Secretary, 3 or more Members-at-large and the 3 Ministerial staff (ex-officio).

Current committees/teams at Parkdale involve dozens of volunteers:

- Ministry and Personnel;
- Mission, Outreach and Justice;
- Pastoral Care Team;
- Property Trustees;
- Finance Committee;
- Communications;
- Membership Development;
- Recruitment and Succession Planning;
- Christian Development and Faith Formation;
- Worship
- Property Development Working Group
- A Stewardship Committee is not currently active.

PASTORAL CARE

"A new commandment I give to you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34

Parkdale United Church has a wonderful reputation for its pastoral care, with almost all members of the congregation involved in pastoral care to some extent. This is demonstrated in our love and care for each other and for those in our neighbourhood and beyond,

The Minister of Pastoral Care provides leadership and guidance in identifying those who are needing support of any kind and ensuring access to appropriate care and support. Although this is a behind the scenes ministry with confidentiality assured, opportunities are provided for walking beside those who need support in life and on their spiritual journey.

The Minister of Pastoral Care provides guidance to the Pastoral Care team, comprised of 11 members. A primary focus of this group is to visit seniors and others who are unable to come to church. In recent months pastoral care outreach has expanded to engage the broader congregation in Palliative Care and End-of-Life discussions.

As an outcome of the Women's Retreat in January 2023, women of the congregation continue to meet approximately monthly for prayer, fellowship and food. This group falls under the auspices of Pastoral Care and is a way of providing pastoral care to a wider segment of the population, including the women who attend the monthly sessions on a regular basis. This group has been active in reaching out to the broader congregation, organizing two fraud awareness seminars,

whose invitation was extended to the broader community. These events were very well attended and well received. Similar discussions are planned for fall 2024.

A Prayer Group provides confidential prayer and support to people requesting prayer and to others whose needs are known. There is also a Prayer Shawl group who meet bi-weekly to crochet prayer shawls and for a time of prayer and fellowship. The shawls are provided to anyone in need and to confirmands, baptizands, and new members of the church. A Caregivers' Group of about five or six people meet monthly and provides support and advice to each other. A Writers' Group also meets on a regular basis for prayer, encouragement and support. A Walking Group met on Mondays during January, February and March to walk in the gym and raised \$100 for the youth trip to St. Catherine's this summer; there are plans for this group to reconvene in 2025.

The Caring Kitchens ministry also falls under the auspices of Pastoral Care. This ministry ensures that casseroles, soups and baked goods are available for people in need of a meal at a difficult time. Pastoral Care also oversees seasonal activities such as Easter lilies, cookies at Christmas, and gift cards and notes to students at exam time. On an ongoing basis, pastoral care includes sending cards, attending funerals, helping at receptions, driving to appointments, and other related activities.

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40

FAITH FORMATION AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Faith formation and Christian Education are priorities for the congregation.

There is a regular and well-attended Bible study, a Lenten study series, book discussions, and pre-marriage and baptism classes, all led by the Coordinating Minister.

During Lent, contributors choose a daily passage of scripture and write a personal witness to faith and belief. The contributions are distributed in a weekly "Camino" newsletter.

Ministry to children and youth is at the very core of Parkdale's work and purpose, and the Congregational Designated Minister for Youth and Young Families plays a leading role in this area. Children's spiritual development is as crucial to their health and happiness as their physical, mental, and emotional growth. We strive to create safe, diverse, open, loving environments full of windows through which kids and families can experience God, learn about, and know Jesus, while building a network of great church-friends.

In 2011 our Sunday school rooms were renovated and provide an attractive and functional space for children to play, learn and grow together.

Our youth ran the "Second Blessing Coffee Shop" once a month after the Sunday morning worship service. There are plans to revive this.

Parkdale offers a Nursery for infants and toddlers, a Pre-school class for children aged 4-6 years old, Sunday school classes for children in grades 1-6, Faith Formation for youth in grades 5-12, a college and careers group for university and college students, and a young adult group (IGNITE) for those 25+ years old.

Outside of Sunday services, Parkdale also offers various educational opportunities for children and young families throughout the year, such as Vacation Bible School in the summer and seasonal activities with a spiritual twist: Halloween parties, Christmas gingerbread house decorating, and Easter egg hunts, etc.

Confirmation classes are offered for those in grades seven and up. Youth in this age group are encouraged to volunteer at Parkdale's *In From the Cold* program and in other roles that integrate them into the service and ministry of our congregation. There are also social activities for older youth such as bowling, indoor golf, cooking and baking (with the resulting food shared with the congregation and others).

Periodically sports and outings are also part of the program. College and careers students meet for a monthly lunch and the Ignite group meets regularly for study, and have occasional outings and social gatherings.

Intergenerational worship services, in which children and youth actively participate, are also a regular part of life at Parkdale.

All these programs support young families, children and youth to know God's love as revealed in Jesus Christ, to grow in understanding of the Christian faith and to be involved in the mission of the Church.

WORSHIP ARTS

As an open congregation which celebrates diversity and inclusion, we embrace diverse forms of worship that reflect the richness and variety of God's creation and our global community. Different styles, traditions, and artistic expressions, not only enrich our worship experience but also make our gatherings more inclusive and accessible to people of different backgrounds, and open doors to new ways of experiencing and connecting with the Divine. We embrace all creative formats for connecting with the Divine.

Our current groups include . . .

The senior choir has a broad and diverse repertoire of anthems which include perennial favourites as well as new and interesting additions. The choir also collaborates with other choral and orchestral groups for added variety. For example, the choir recently collaborated with three German community choirs from Ottawa, as well as the Ottawa Guitar Society Orchestra in a Spring Concert, and has collaborated with the Parkdale Orchestra at different times.

Dalesong, Parkdale's choir focussing on contemporary Christian music, performs monthly in services featuring Parkdale's youth band discussed more below. Dalesong plans to feature more instrumentalists in the future, as bass and drums are brought into regular services. Several members also offer contemporary Christian solos.

Parkdale's youth music ministry, led by Mélanie Hartshorn-Walton, includes a youth band which often joins with Dalesong at intergenerational services. The youth choir often sings anthems of their own. Similarly, the youth ministry leads the annual nativity play which includes lively presentations with singing, dancing and animation. In addition, the brand new intergenerational Ukulele ensemble recently made its debut.

Moving in Spirit (MIS), Parkdale's liturgical dance choir, engages and involves the congregation with its unique movement pieces intended to animate and emphasise liturgical messages in the service. These special presentations help draw the congregation closer to the meaning of the service with captivating choreography, music, and other accessories. For example, MIS has led the congregation in a special service that celebrated the different cultures in the Parkdale community, which featured special guest, Stacey Can-Tamakloe on African drum.

Theatre Arts, Parkdale has a small, ad hoc, but budding theatre arts ministry that occasionally animates intergenerational services with skits, tableaux, story telling and discussions. We look forward to seeing this ministry expand in the future.

Parkdale welcomes musicians and other artists from the community as they help to enliven the service and add vibrancy to our spiritual journey. Examples of artists who have enhanced our service include, the Imani Gospel singers from Montreal who join us annually on the Sunday before Martin Luther King Jr's birth date, the Tubari trio which enlivened our service during the Ottawa Jazz Festival, the Ottawa Guitar Society Orchestra, the Parkdale Orchestra, and a brass quintet to name a few. Other musicians from within the Parkdale family also share their time and talents, including David Creasey on trumpet, Eleanor Creasey and Helen, Susan and Lindsay Carlton on harp and piano, Marianne Dos Santos with her sons Felix and Tristan on piano and voices, as well as the trio of Rob and Irene Hilkes, along with Paul Crabtree. Parkdale is truly blessed with a community of musical talent.

Just as different colors and textures bring depth to a masterpiece, diverse worship formats add vitality to our collective spiritual journey, allowing us to see and celebrate the many facets of faith in fresh and meaningful ways.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES

Strengths:

- Ministerial staff, preaching
- Strong Christian Education program, and ministry for children, youth and young families
- A very diverse, and heavily involved congregation that welcomes new faces
- Honored and recognized by neighbours
- Strong pastoral care program
- Sponsorship and support for refugees, community outreach,
- Healthy music ministry
- Strong financials: Each year we either meet our expenses or declare a small surplus. We carry no debt, and our facility is owned.
- A large facility (albeit aging) with various spaces for gathering, offices, three kitchens, a wonderful pipe organ, grand piano, well-equipped classroom and daycare space and a full-size gymnasium.
- Technology: video projection and broadcasting, security camera system, flat-screen televisions, 32-channel digital mixer in sanctuary, etc.

Weaknesses:

- Environmental witness (e.g., each year at our AGM there is continued discussion about our investment in fossil fuel infrastructure)
- Facilities: an old, inaccessible building
- Volunteer fatigue: We currently are missing people for several key roles
- Although we are healthy financially, each year we spend a portion of the interest and dividend income from our investments to offset our budget deficit

Opportunities:

- Hundreds of feet of prime street front: outreach to the community
- Music: Expanded music program
- Neighbours: new buildings for seniors in the neighborhood (new neighbours),
- Communication: new forms of on-line/streaming communication, new skills for promoting our church, involvement opportunities, to highlight roles that are open for people to get involved – including social media
- Strategic planning: annual goals, redefining “church”, relevance and importance to the community
- Youth and Young Families: ongoing development of new youth and young families program, exploring relevance to young adults; amazing children programs
- Parkdale's Property re-development is a huge opportunity for us (see separate section).
- Worship: Ask ourselves – what could we do on a Sunday morning that would double our number.
- There are always opportunities to increase adult Christian education and fellowship outside of our Sunday morning worship. There are modest initiatives, but we could be “bolder”. Members remember fondly for example, our journey through “Unbinding the Gospel” several years ago as being formative for the congregation. More recently, the deliberate small group discernment around LGBTQ+ justice was a meaningful, and community building/growing process.

Challenges:

- An inaccessible and aging building requiring significant and costly repairs and upgrades;
- The retirement of our much loved and well-respected Coordinating Minister after 25 years of service.

THINGS WE ARE WORKING ON...

Welcoming Those in the LGBTQ+ Community

In 2022 after a year of congregational discernment and prayerful small group work, Parkdale United Church changed its outdated marriage policy. An excerpt of the revised policy follows:

Parkdale United Church supports Christian marriage for any couple, at least one of whom is a full member in the body of Christ, who approach our licenced

ministers regarding officiating a Christian marriage ceremony, and that is prepared to work with a member of the ministerial team in prayerful preparation.

While this was a very positive step for our community, we acknowledge that there is still much to be accomplished to ensure that all feel welcome, are equally loved by God and are invited to participated fully in all aspects of our Christian life together. This may include discernment regarding additional steps to more publicly proclaim our allyship on signage, etc.

Property Development

Parkdale's Property Development Working Group has been working on options for property redevelopment since 2017. This work is necessary given several key issues:

The building has serious **accessibility** challenges. There are steps inside every door. Access to the sanctuary is possible via a ramp in the Gladstone parking lot, but there is no washroom on this level. The one accessible washroom is accessible from the sanctuary by going down the ramp, which is not covered, and entering the building through a different door, where there is a bit of a lip. We believe that universal access is a necessity in 2024.

The safety and security of our staff and our children is a priority. The building has 11 or more doors, many of which are open during services and events. It would be easy for someone to enter or exit unseen.

While we have a welcoming congregation, the building does not reflect this, with its maze-like passageways in the basement and many sets of stairs.

The congregation has been kept apprised of the work of the PDWG over the years and is generally supportive. As we continue to work towards clarifying our vision, we are confident that the Holy Spirit is leading us towards a future as a hub of missional and community collaboration, a beacon of hope for many, and including outreach to the more vulnerable. Sophisticated models for various options, some including a mid-rise apartment building in addition to significant renovation of the church, have been shared and have generated considerable excitement.

At the AGM in February 2023, the PDWG tabled several motions, designed to clarify intentions and formally create a Housing Sub-group. These motions, which were all passed unanimously, can be found below, for information.

Motion #1: That the congregation approve the PDWG plan to proceed with more focused consideration of exploratory options that involve partial retention of the sanctuary, or a total rebuild of the church. As part of these options, the PDWG will continue to look at opportunities to support the community and enhance our missional programming, including housing. The PDWG will not further explore options that maintain the status quo or only add an elevator, as these options have been found to inadequately support or enhance |Parkdale's ability to carry out its vision and mission.

Motion #2: That the congregation approve proceeding with consideration of affordable/supportive housing options as part of the redevelopment plans.

Motion #3: that the congregation approve the creation of a separate group to further the discussion on housing.

PDWG were greatly encouraged by the unanimous support received for these motions and we continue to move forward towards these ends.

Knowing that we need to assess our ability to raise a significant amount of money, we recently contracted with Daniel Hussey of Hussey Philanthropic Consulting to assist us in determining our capacity for raising a significant amount of money and our Campaign Readiness. Although it is early days in this process as yet, we are confident that Daniel will assist us in clarifying a project vision that includes an overview of the services our community hub will offer to the community in the future.

We are cognizant of the fact that we are first and foremost a church, albeit a church with a history of significant social service support to the community. We are currently exploring ideas for what Parkdale United Church might need to be in fifty years. How can we help contribute to the creation of God's kingdom on earth? Although there remains much work to be done, we are an Easter people, and we live in hope.

Affordable Housing

With the support of the congregation, in 2023 the Property Development Working Group set up a Housing Subgroup to explore the feasibility of including a housing component in the redevelopment of Parkdale's property. The Subgroup first met in May 2023, and has consulted with around 40 different organizations and individuals, including affordable housing developers and operators, health and social support organizations, City of Ottawa officials, housing and homelessness advocates, neighbourhood associations, and other churches undertaking similar redevelopment and housing projects. Many of those groups are eager to partner with us, either to place their clients in units in a future building, or to provide services and supports to residents.

After a year of consultations and research, the Subgroup has been developing more concrete options for what the housing component of Parkdale's redevelopment could look like. There are many factors to consider, from the overall size of the building, to the number and type of individual units, to the financing required to build and operate it, to the governance structure and partnerships that will be needed to manage things day to day. In broad terms, the project could include between 100 and 125 units in a building up to 9 storeys tall, with a mix of market rent, below-market rent at 70-80% of city average rates, and deeply-affordable units where tenants pay no more than 30% of their income. Project costs will depend on interest rates and other variables, but the majority of costs could be financed with assistance from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The Subgroup continues to work toward a final set of recommendations to the Property Development Working Group.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Our financial resources are sound, with annual givings, facility rentals, and special fund-raising events able to cover the vast majority of costs, while any year-to-year deficits are met through interest gained from a healthy investment portfolio. Should there be an extraordinary expense (e.g. new building) this will need to be reviewed.

Refer to Financial Statement from JNAC January 2023