

# Christ Church, Niagara Falls



Parish Profile 2020

# Location and Membership

## **Our Town**

Niagara Falls is a medium-sized border town where tourism is the keystone in the local economy. Health care and manufacturing play smaller, but still significant roles in driving the local economy. The share occupied by health care is set to grow when the new hospital complex is built in southwest Niagara Falls.

Part of the Niagara Region, Niagara Falls residents benefit from proximity to other local municipalities. Niagara-on-the-Lake is nearby as are Thorold and Welland. Because of its larger population, St. Catharines is a major draw, offering access to specialized health care and the many resources of Brock University.

The old downtown where our church is located has been experiencing decline for the past 15-20 years. The remaining independent businesses in this area of town are struggling. Many of the homes immediately surrounding the church have been converted to Bed and Breakfast type business. We have begun to see people moving from more expensive real estate markets into some of the homes near the church. Still, working people who live near the church mostly drive out of the neighbourhood to work.

We hope that there will be some regeneration in our corner of town when Metrolinx finally begins running daily GO service into Toronto from Niagara Falls. Also, Ryerson University has plans to build a satellite campus that will be located 6 blocks from Christ Church near the GO Station in the Northeast corner of downtown. We hope these two developments will help to breathe new life into our neighbourhood!

## **Our Church**

Christ Church is one of three Anglican Churches in Niagara Falls. Christ Church is centrally located near the old downtown, approximately 3 Km from the Horseshoe Falls and, therefore, in the vicinity of the tourism district. St. John's Stamford is approximately 5 Km to the North and West. Holy Trinity Chippawa is approximately 7Km to the South.

Christ Church is situated along River Road. The Memorial Garden, featuring a war memorial, flower beds, benches and mature trees, lies to the South of the church. The Parish Hall adjoins the church to the North. The Parish Hall encloses the parish offices, the Chrysler Room, the Parish Hall, and the McDonald Room. The Rectory is also on the property, North of the church and East of the Parish Hall, facing River Road. The Rectory is currently unoccupied.

In past years, we know that people living in Niagara Falls viewed Christ Church as one of the focal points of the local community. Several parish events still receive notice from our neighbours in the Falls — the spring sale, the Strawberry Social, the Peach Festival, Remembrance Sunday, the Christmas Bazaar — but we are aware that churches are no longer viewed as key elements in the social fabric of our town. We are keen to find new ways to raise our visibility, and to become a draw for our neighbours again.

In terms of demographics, our parishioners are older and less ethnically diverse than the population of Niagara Falls. At present, we have 136 members distributed across 102 households. Our most recent donor statistics from 2018 show that we had 172 identifiable donors in that year. While the great majority of our members are retirement age and older, our members are surprisingly energetic, generous with their time, and generous financially.

## Worship

### **Our pre-COVID worship schedule**

#### Sunday Services

8:00 a.m.      Holy Communion – B.C.P.

Average Attendance in 2019 - 20

10:00 a.m.      1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays – B.A.S. 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays - B.C.P.

Average Attendance in 2019 - 57

## Weekday Service

Thursdays 10:00 a.m. – B.A.S. – St. Martin Chapel

Average Attendance in 2019 – 8.

## **Our schedule now that we are open again for in-person worship**

### Sunday Service

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist – using BAS and Lutheran Book of Worship.

### Wednesday Service

11:00 a.m. Holy Communion – using the BCP.

### Online Services

Interim clergy send an email to members of the parish every Saturday morning, to share news of happenings at Christ Church. These emails include a link to the online services led by Bishop Susan.

Christ Church takes care of 3 monthly services in local nursing homes. Nursing home ministry is currently suspended because of COVID Restrictions.

## **Special Services**

Special services are held during the year, including, Ash Wednesday, Mothering Sunday (with Simnel cake and the distribution of a flower to the women in attendance), Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Easter Sunday, July 1st (Canada Day), Thanksgiving, All Saints Day, Remembrance Day, Advent, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day.

Christ Church is the Garrison Church in Niagara Falls of the Lincoln & Welland Regiment, and they hold special services here. The monument for the Regiment is the focal point in our “Memorial Garden”, and they join us each November



for our Remembrance Day Service, when all divisions of the military and various organizations place wreaths following the indoor Church Service.

### **Music/Choir**

Tom Skinner is the Church Organist and Choir Leader. His wife, Roseanne, often serves as cantor. At present we have four choir members. In pre-COVID times, the Choir also took a turn at providing light refreshments at Sunday Coffee Hour.

### **Styles of Worship**

Approximately 15 years ago, when 3 other Anglican parishes in Niagara Falls closed, members of those parishes were given a summary of what to expect at the remaining parishes. They were told that Christ Church was traditional liturgically, favouring the BCP with occasional use of the BAS, and using the pipe organ to lead congregational singing.

To be sure, some members of the congregation are deeply nourished by the words of the BCP. But a majority are open to more modern forms of liturgy. Many go looking for services featuring prayers taken from the BAS or the Lutheran Book of Worship.

In a recent parish survey, the congregation was asked a hypothetical question to gauge their willingness to move away from traditional liturgy: If we could attract a steady flow of newcomers to the parish by changing the way we worship, what features of the service would you be unwilling to part with? Three respondents said, "Don't change anything." Many more made comments to the effect of, Change what you need to change, as long as there is a Communion service that is recognizably Anglican. A trusted clergy leader will continue to make traditional forms of worship available while gradually introduce new and creative sources for liturgy.

A recent parish workshop asked the congregation to talk about their favourite hymns. The much-loved chestnuts were mentioned. But when table groups were asked to choose one from among their favourites for the whole group to sing, the majority were upbeat songs composed in the last 50 or 60 years. There is an appetite in the congregation for the familiar and the comforting. But the musical palate of the place certainly includes modern-sounding hymns and service music.

Probably the reputation of Christ Church outside the congregation still tends to the traditional. But the past 3 Rectors have gradually introduced contemporary liturgy and some more upbeat music. Inside Christ Church, there is willingness to try new things. The congregation is open to evolutionary, not revolutionary change.

## Organizational Structure

### **Corporation**

The Corporation at Christ Church consists of:

the Rector,

the Rector's Warden; and

the People's Warden.

Assisting the Corporation are:

a Deputy Rector's Warden,

a Deputy People's Warden,

the Treasurer, and

the bookkeeper.

### **Parish Council**

In pre-COVID times, Parish Council held a public meeting each month. Restrictions on in-person meeting have meant that Parish Council has gathered less frequently. In addition to members of Corporation, members of the property committee and representatives from our parish groups attend.

## **Re-opening Coordinators**

The Interim Pastor appointed three people to serve as re-opening coordinators: With the Interim Pastor, this group fashioned the plans which enabled Christ Church to re-open for in person worship beginning on October 4, 2020. The group has since met to evaluate our procedures for screening worshippers, gathering information for contact tracing, maintaining a safe physical distance, and disinfecting the worship space.

## **Employees**

Paid positions at Christ Church in addition to the Rector are as follows:

Organist – paid for 10 hours a week with no benefits;

Caretaker – paid for 25 hours a week with no benefits; and

Parish Administrator – paid for 12 hours a week with no benefits.

Total salaries and benefits for 2019 totalled \$106,430.61 and made up 50% of the total parish expenses.

## **Parish Groups**

### **A.C.W. – Anglican Church Women**

Before the pandemic shut-down, our Anglican Church Women met most Thursdays from 10am to 2pm to create beautiful quilts and other items for sale at the Christmas Bazaar. In 2019 they created a quilt of valour to be given to a Canadian Veteran. They also sell Church Calendars each year. This is a small group of ladies who enjoy quilting and fellowship.



### **Altar Guild**

Members of the Altar Guild prepare the church for services each week, decorate the church for special occasions, and place memorial flowers for families who request them. There are currently 12 members working in teams of 3. The activities of the Altar Guild were reduced in response to new restrictions under our pandemic reopening plan.

### **Bereavement Group**

Before the pandemic shut-down, this group provided compassionate hospitality to families and their guests following funerals at the church. A number of people volunteered to make food and other refreshments, which were delivered to the church on the day of a funeral. Hosts set up the hall, served the food and cleaned up following the reception.



### **Chi Rho Fellowship**

The Chi Rho Fellowship at Christ Church began in 1947 and continues today as an active social club for adult men and women. Before the pandemic shut-down, meetings were held once a month on a Friday afternoon, from September to May. Members enjoyed a pot-luck lunch, then

a short business meeting is followed by a social time. There is often a speaker on a topic of interest to the group. Other times there are games, quizzes or perhaps a video to view.

### **Climate Justice Niagara**

Christ Church achieved Silver status under the previous Greening Niagara program. The leadership team has implemented procedures to reduce the carbon footprint of the church. For instance, at last year's Annual Vestry, the parish approved a motion to eliminate single use plastics by 2022.

### **Informals**

Before the pandemic shut-down, the Informals met weekly on Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The ladies enjoyed fellowship while working on various craft projects. They would eat lunch together, then plan their future activities. They took care of Coffee Hour once a month and helped



with other events when called upon. On Palm Sunday they would hold a Bread Sale with proceeds going to the P.W.R.D.F. In June they would hold a Spring Sale of plants, baked goods and crafts. They would also contribute to the annual Christmas Bazaar each November. This was a very active group of women.



### **Pastoral Care Team**

In years past, clergy gathered a group of people to visit members who were isolated or ill. Some members of the Pastoral Care Team would assist clergy in visits and services at local long term care homes. The group no longer meets formally, but past members still reach out with phone calls, and they keep in touch by sending cards and dropping off church bulletins and newsletters. The importance of this informal ministry has been obvious through the pandemic shut-down.

## **Finances**

The following is a summary of Christ Church's financial statements for 2018 and 2019.

Financial Recap 2018

<b>Receipts</b>		YTD Dec 2018	Budget 2018	<b>Disbursements</b>	YTD Dec 2018	Budget 2018
Envelopes		\$ 126,965.15	\$ 128,000.00	<b>Salaries</b>	\$ 88,608.80	\$86,402.00
Open		\$ 2,891.18	\$ 3,000.00	<b>CPP/EI</b>	\$ 5,237.88	\$5,460.00
Other		\$ -	\$ 1,200.00	<b>Pension</b>	\$ 11,307.84	\$11,314.00
Easter		\$ 2,572.30	\$ 3,000.00	<b>WSIB</b>	\$ 855.71	\$891.00
Thanksgiving		\$ 1,999.00	\$ 2,500.00	<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 4,352.28	\$3,905.00
Christmas		\$ 3,486.00	\$ 4,000.00	<b>Term Ins &amp; Cont. Edu.</b>	\$ 600.00	\$620.00
Total Collections		<b>\$137,913.63</b>	<b>\$141,700.00</b>	<b>Organ &amp; Pulpit Supply</b>	\$ 450.00	\$1,000.00
				<b>Total Salary Expense</b>	\$111,412.51	\$109,592.00
Parish Investments		\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	<b>Diocesan Assessment</b>	\$ 39,895.33	\$40,572.00
Hall & Weddings		\$ 2,481.25	\$ 3,000.00	<b>Community Outreach</b>		\$500.00
HST rebate		\$ 3,846.54	\$ 5,000.00	<b>Worship expense</b>	\$ 169.15	\$300.00
Organizations & Fund Raising		\$ 16,580.35	\$ 17,000.00	<b>Synod Fees</b>	\$ 585.00	\$550.00
Misc		\$ 1,633.06	\$ 1,000.00	<b>Fuel</b>	\$ 10,293.24	\$9,200.00
Bequests		\$ -	\$ 10,000.00	<b>Electricity</b>	\$ 5,708.67	\$7,200.00
Sub-total		\$54,541.20	\$66,000.00	<b>Water</b>	\$ 1,848.14	\$1,700.00
				<b>Insurance</b>	\$ 14,037.44	\$13,000.00
Total planned receipts		<b>\$192,454.83</b>	<b>\$207,700.00</b>	<b>City Taxes</b>	\$ 1,577.42	\$1,700.00
Transfers from other accounts		\$ 58,787.42	\$ 9,495.00	<b>Discretionary Fund</b>	\$ 300.00	\$1,500.00
Sub-total receipts		\$251,242.25	\$217,195.00	<b>M&amp;R Church</b>	\$ 11,946.84	\$11,000.00
				<b>M&amp;R Rectory</b>	\$ 1,530.38	\$1,000.00
Extra investment withdrawal		\$ 10,188.02	\$ -	<b>Grounds</b>	\$ 3,014.20	\$500.00
Total receipts		\$261,430.27	\$217,195.00	<b>Office Supplies</b>	\$ 1,056.15	\$750.00
Designated funds receipts		\$ 660.52		<b>Printing</b>	\$ 856.86	\$1,500.00
Total		\$262,090.79	\$217,195.00	<b>Copier lease</b>	\$ 1,812.84	\$1,805.00
				<b>Communications</b>	\$ 2,383.84	\$2,700.00
Designated funds receipts				<b>Computer</b>	\$ 145.77	\$200.00
	PWRDF	\$ 332.00		<b>Alarm</b>		\$976.00
	Forward day by day	\$ (89.49)		<b>Organ Maintenance</b>	\$ 568.94	\$700.00
	Messy Church	\$ -		<b>Elevator</b>	\$ 31,134.50	\$1,500.00
	Hampers	\$ 50.00		<b>Advertising</b>	\$ 77.53	\$300.00
	Memorial Flowers	\$ 328.00		<b>Altar</b>	\$ 984.75	
	User Group Ins	\$ (135.00)		<b>Custodial Supplies</b>	\$ 336.50	\$750.00
	Outreach	\$ (87.22)		<b>Postage</b>	\$ 510.00	\$600.00
	Initial Envelopes	\$ 262.23		<b>Bank Charges</b>	\$ 121.46	\$150.00
		\$ 660.52		<b>HST</b>	\$ 5,295.07	\$4,500.00
				<b>Pastoral Care</b>		\$100.00
				<b>Police check</b>		\$50.00
				<b>Training</b>		\$250.00
				<b>Sunday School</b>		\$50.00
				<b>Sundry</b>	\$ 250.30	\$2,000.00
				<b>Operating Expenses</b>	\$136,440.32	\$107,603.00
				<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$247,852.83</b>	<b>\$217,195.00</b>
				<b>Add.rev. over expense</b>	<b>-\$247,852.83</b>	

Financial Recap 2019

<b>Receipts</b>		YTD Dec 2019	Budget 2019	<b>Disbursements</b>	YTD Dec 2019	Budget 2019
Envelopes		\$ 118,323.25	\$ 125,000.00	<b>Salaries</b>	\$ 86,145.56	\$93,000.00
Open		\$ 3,267.35	\$ 3,000.00	<b>CPP/EI</b>	\$ 5,115.72	\$5,400.00
Other		\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	<b>Pension</b>	\$ 7,944.88	\$11,500.00
Easter		\$ 2,851.95	\$ 2,500.00	<b>WSIB</b>	\$ 515.68	\$890.00
Thanksgiving		\$ 1,757.00	\$ 2,000.00	<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 3,177.78	\$4,600.00
Christmas		\$ 3,731.00	\$ 3,500.00	<b>Term Ins &amp; Con Edu</b>	\$ 500.00	\$600.00
Total Collections		<b>\$129,930.55</b>	<b>\$137,000.00</b>	<b>Organ &amp; Pulpit Supply</b>	\$ 3,030.99	\$500.00
Parish Investments		\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	<b>Total Salary Expense</b>	\$106,430.61	\$116,490.00
Hall & Weddings		\$ 2,163.92	\$ 3,000.00	<b>Diocesan Assessment</b>	\$ 38,250.31	\$38,250.00
HST rebate		\$ 1,416.84	\$ 5,000.00	<b>Community Outreach</b>	\$ 500.00	\$500.00
Organizations & Fund Raising		\$ 23,203.80	\$ 17,000.00	<b>Worship expense</b>	\$ (1.25)	\$200.00
Misc		\$ 0.40	\$ 2,000.00	<b>Synod Fees</b>	\$ 295.00	\$600.00
Bequests		\$ -	\$ -	<b>Fuel</b>	\$ 10,923.01	\$9,700.00
Sub-total		\$56,784.96	\$57,000.00	<b>Electricity</b>	\$ 5,580.52	\$5,700.00
total planned receipts		<b>\$186,715.51</b>	<b>\$194,000.00</b>	<b>Water</b>	\$ 1,804.91	\$2,000.00
transfers from other accounts		\$ 23,712.81	\$ 27,000.00	<b>Insurance</b>	\$ 13,905.38	\$14,000.00
sub total receipts		\$210,428.32	\$221,000.00	<b>City Taxes</b>	\$ 1,541.84	\$1,600.00
extra investment withdrawal		\$ -	\$ -	<b>Discretionary Fund</b>	\$ 620.00	\$750.00
total receipts		\$210,428.32	\$221,000.00	<b>M&amp;R Church</b>	\$ 9,363.72	\$12,000.00
designated funds receipts		\$ 479.70		<b>M&amp;R Rectory</b>	\$ 762.17	\$1,500.00
total		\$210,908.02	\$221,000.00	<b>Grounds</b>	\$ 372.18	\$500.00
				<b>Office Supplies</b>	\$ 816.43	\$1,000.00
designated funds receipts				<b>Printing</b>	\$ 752.42	\$1,000.00
	PWRDF	\$ 452.00		<b>Copier lease</b>	\$ 1,713.24	\$2,000.00
	Forward day by day	\$ (119.13)		<b>Communications</b>	\$ 2,280.90	\$2,600.00
				<b>Computer</b>	\$ 95.00	\$200.00
	Hampers	\$ 113.30		<b>Alarm</b>	\$ 4,764.04	
	Memorial Flowers	\$ 295.00		<b>Organ Maintenance</b>	\$ 390.00	\$600.00
	User Group Ins	\$ (135.00)		<b>Elevator</b>	\$ 5,469.25	\$2,850.00
	Outreach	\$ (487.22)		<b>Advertising</b>	\$ 75.63	\$200.00
	Initial Envelopes	\$ 360.75		<b>Altar</b>		
		\$ 479.70		<b>Custodial Supplies</b>	\$ 429.44	\$500.00
Recap for the year				<b>Postage</b>	\$ 445.00	\$600.00
Total planned receipts		\$ 221,000.00		<b>Bank Charges</b>	\$ 121.27	\$150.00
Actual receipts		\$ 210,428.32		<b>HST</b>	\$ 4,168.23	\$4,000.00
shortfall		\$ 10,571.68		<b>Pastoral Care</b>		\$100.00
				<b>Police check</b>		\$50.00
Total planned expenses		\$ 220,890.00		<b>Training</b>		\$200.00
Actual expenses		\$ 214,641.38		<b>Sunday School</b>	\$ 43.85	\$50.00
under planned expenses		\$ 6,248.62		<b>Sundry(mileage)</b>	\$ 2,728.28	\$1,000.00
				<b>Operating Expenses</b>	\$108,210.77	\$104,400.00
Expenses excess over receipts		\$ 4,213.06		<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$214,641.38</b>	<b>\$220,890.00</b>

# The Church Property

## **Decennial Inspection**

Our last decennial inspection was carried out in 2018. All of the pressing issues identified at that time have been addressed. In the last 12 months, we completed one of the largest outstanding long-term repairs: replacing the flat roof over the Southern section of the Parish Hall (between the Memorial Hall and the church, with the parish office on the main level and the McDonald Room on the upper level). There are no major outstanding issues in the church, the Parish Hall or the Rectory. We recently replaced the fire monitoring panel and installed a backflow valve on our connection to the municipal water supply. At present, we are repairing the downpipe that drains the flat roof and repairing some damaged masonry on an exterior wall of the church, repairing the masonry on the Rectory garage, and we are completing some painting in the Rectory.

## **Outside User Groups**

Each year our Annual Vestry considers a motion to enable the Corporation to licence the use of space in our facility. This motion was approved at our last Vestry. At present, there are two outside groups using space in our building: the “Freedom Road” Narcotics Anonymous group and a yoga group that promotes active living for seniors. We have a good relationship with both user groups — space use agreements are renewed annually.

# Situation Analysis

## **Our Part in God’s Mission**

We are an aging congregation. For many of us, Christ Church has been our spiritual home for many years. Through those years, we have supported various outreach projects, but we see that there is declining energy among our current members. At present, we collect non-perishable food which our volunteer outreach coordinators distribute to two members of the congregation, with



the majority of food donations going to Project Share. Leading up to Christmas, we collect gifts and food for 10 needy families in Niagara Falls. Members of our congregation are generous when we ask them to contribute to outreach projects. When it comes to our engagement with the community outside the doors of our church, we want our next Rector to help us make connections and find creative ways to engage our members. We know that some of our neighbours are struggling with issues of unemployment, food security, lack of affordable housing, and mental health issues. We feel compassion around these concerns, and we see how this compassion connects us to Jesus' call for justice in the Gospels and to the call to action in our diocesan Mission Action Plan. But we are not sure exactly how God is calling us to get involved. We are open to some leadership in this area from our new Rector.

### **Concerns Around Pursuing God's Mission**

Like many churches, we are aware that our "glory days" are in the past. It's difficult to attract new members, and we are all a little worried about the future of our parish. We have the ongoing concern of maintaining our aging buildings. The Parochial Committee found a general willingness to embrace incremental change when we surveyed people individually. People are open to moving forward at an individual level, but it will take more time for this message to become part of the identity of the parish as a whole. Our next Rector will have success moving forward with new projects when they take the time to listen and understand what parts of our current practice nourish us most deeply and where the growth edges allow us the space and creativity to try new things.

### **Hopes for Our Next Rector**

Members of Christ Church want our next Rector to prioritize a lot of the things that clergy normally do: preaching and presiding in public worship; ministering to the sick, dying and bereaved; counselling those going through major life changes; recruiting, training and assisting lay leaders; and casting a vision for how we will share in God's mission. But our members expect to be involved in some of this work! For example, 55% of people surveyed think that leadership in

worship should be shared with lay people. And 90% of respondents think that lay people should be involved in forming the overall plans for the parish.

Members of Christ Church are ready to form a bond with our next Rector. We want a priest who will take the time to understand our needs. That priest will invite the congregation into a process of evolutionary change, not revolutionary change. Here's an example of what we mean by evolutionary change: if there are changes to be made in our worship, our next Rector will begin from the foundation of our existing liturgical practice, and move slowly, making sure we get lots of the familiar words and music that make Christ Church our spiritual home. We know that changes are ahead for us. We want to call a priest who will help us through those changes, bringing in new members, and taking good care of us along the way.