

St. Jude's Anglican Church

London, Ontario

A coalition of personal thoughts about our faith
brought forward by addressing Four Questions:

1. What Is The Character Of Your GOD?
2. What is the Content of my Faith?
3. What is the Purpose of My Worship?
4. What is the function of your Community?



2010

Introduction

The accompanying report is the final collation of the answers to the four questions distributed by the Vision Committee.

1. What Is The Character Of Your GOD?
2. What is the Content of my Faith?
3. What is the Purpose of My Worship?
4. What is the function of your Community?

We were very encouraged by the many responses from our parish members.

The Vision committee will be reading over the responses and making recommendations to the parish in the fall.

Included in this summary, you will find the discussion of Question 3 -- "The Purpose of Our Worship", which took place after church on May 2nd. We encourage you to take time over the summer to read over all the responses.

We will be meeting again on September 19th, after church, to present come changes in our worship, as well as, a discussion of Question 4 -- "Function of Our Community".

On behalf of the Vision Committee, we would like to thank you for taking the time to answer the questions and being involved in the future of our community.

We wish you all a very restful and creative summer.

God Bless,

Your Vision Committee,

Question 1

What Is The Character Of Your GOD?

Responses presented to the congregations from Vision Committee members:

Since asking ourselves on the Vision Team this profound question, I have done some hard thinking. This is hard work!

First, I thought of a series of character traits that I think apply to God. But then these seemed abstract to me and empty if not discussed in terms of how they relate to us as people. So I chose two character traits, God's love and God's justice, and reflected on what they mean to me and what they might mean for us as a church.

I share this with you in humility, knowing that these are just my thoughts and you might agree or disagree. Please just don't be indifferent.

1. God is love. To me this means that all people are worthy of unconditional love. Yet how do I apply this?

Matt preached a couple of weeks ago on the story of the prodigal son and reminded us that the story is not really about the son but about the father. It is a story of unconditional love of a father to his child. This parable teaches us about God as a giver of unconditional love, regardless of what we have done or not done.

If all people are loved by God unconditionally, then all deserve to experience unconditional love. Perhaps then this is one of the purposes of St. Jude's, namely to love unconditionally all the members in our church. But how do we do this? And what about our wider community and the world beyond?

If all people are loved by God then all people are of equal value and inherent worth. This has profound implications. It gives value to all people regardless of race, religion, nationality, size of bank account, etc.

It means also that God loves more than just the people in my church. God cannot be tied down to one denomination, such as Anglicanism, and not even to one religion, such as Christianity. Does this mean then that we should open our doors to other Christian groups and even other religious traditions? Does it mean we should stop worrying about losing our Anglican identity? At a minimum, if God loves everyone it must mean that we should at least listen to others.

I should clarify that I do not think that God's love means that we should all share possessions equally, although such a conclusion logically derives from God's love for all. But the communists tried to share equally and it didn't work. So rather than start up a commune, I think showing unconditional love means we have to find the courage and wisdom to know when to give to others in need and, on the other hand, when to hold others accountable for their poor decisions.

In other words, perhaps unconditional love does not always mean bailing people out of every problem?

2. God is just. To me this means that all people are of equal value and inherent worth. Yet how do I apply this?

I am a lawyer (please, no groaning and rolling of the eyes at this point) and we often say that the rule of law must prevail, which is another way of saying that no one is above the law.

I think God's character demands justice and that all be treated equally before the law. Sometimes this means turning the other cheek and taking a pacifist position. Other times it requires intervention and even violent intervention. I don't think it means we should always be pacifists although I understand why some Christians think that is the correct approach. This is why I am not opposed to police or military action when it is needed; justice requires it. The difficulty is finding the courage and wisdom to know when which is required. War for the sake of war is wrong. But allowing evil to continue unchecked is also wrong.

For example, I think God's justice requires that we support the war in Afghanistan because it means protecting women and children from abusive crimes against them by the Taliban. It also means, for example, that we oppose all the ways in which children are victimized in our own community, including abuse and child pornography. As a church then, does God's justice require that we sometimes be vocal for harsher punishment of evil doers? I think God is not a pansy and won't be pushed over to allow injustice.

This does not mean that God is vengeful or hateful. Rather, God is just.

In the end God's justice requires that we all be treated equally, having the same opportunities and consequences for the choices we make.

I think God's character of love and justice raises difficult questions about which we won't always agree. I am thankful we are at least having this discussion. I actually think this is what church is all about. And I would like to know what you think.

Presented to St. Jude's congregation by Vision Team Member, Mar. 28, 2010.

"Nurturing, peaceful and ever present, powerful, strong and just, compassionate and forgiving. Whose love is so encompassing it is the one thing that connects me to everyone and everything."

Presented to St. Jude's congregation by Vision Team Member, Mar. 28, 2010.

Responses from the Parish Questionnaires:

- Nurturing, peaceful and ever present. Powerful strong and just. Compassionate and forgiving. Whose Love is so encompassing, it is the one thing that connects me to everyone and everything.

- a loving God- unconditionally
 - is not judgmental
 - is a guide in my life - he has all the wisdom of the universe to offer me. When I pray, like everyone, of course I want my prayers answered in the manner that I wish and in a timely fashion. But I realize God knows best and some of the paths I could have taken, looking back, could have been disastrous
 - security- I'm not alone in this world - I trust my God
 - a peaceful God - makes me feel at peace when I am anxious or worried
 - a forgiving God - who teaches me to be more caring and compassionate
- My God is the creator of the limitless universe, and since we are only creatures, quite beyond our comprehension. As soon as we try to define God, we impose limitations. Perhaps the nearest we can come to describing the nature of God is to speak in terms of love and light, and to recognize in the lives of Christ and the saints a reflection of that light and love.
- The question assumes one can apply qualities to God; such traits are loving, wrathful, wise or vengeful. We, as humans, tend to superimpose a personality on God, view the Divine as male or female, and provide a location where He or She may reside, such as in the sky or on the earth.

A study of other prominent world religions reveals that people of all cultures respond in a similar manner. We may have a different name for God or our Gods, but we project various attributes onto the Divine. In this way, humans of each religion feel a connection to God.

I think, beyond the God or Goddess, which we personalize, is a Power, a Consciousness, or Truth, which our intellect is incapable for comprehending. For me, God is very abstract, maybe akin to the Eastern concept of Brahman. Brahman is beyond any human conception of what God can or may be. Brahman is Truth, Absolute Consciousness, or Cosmic Consciousness. Brahman is unknowable by the intellect. I believe we all have the Divine within, but our personalities, ego(s), and mind, make it difficult to connect with the Divine. I also believe our essence, or spirit, lives on beyond death, and we sometimes choose to incarnate more than once, to learn new lessons, or, in some cases, to be a guide for others.

My studies in Yoga and Buddhism have influenced me to approach my personal growth from a slightly different perspective, than would orthodox Christians. The teachings of Yoga and Buddhism encourage the individual to develop in three ways: 1) to be a moral or ethical person, 2) to learn to control the mind, and 3) to grow in wisdom. Using tools such as the Yoga poses and meditation, one learns to control the mind and go beyond the intellect, to a deeper experiencing. I feel strongly, these practical tools for control of the mind (yoga and meditation), are not in conflict with my Christian practice. I think we can all benefit from instruction, which helps us to grow, both morally and spiritually. As Christians, I feel we sometimes forget spiritual growth requires more than, "following the rules" or commandments. We need to do more than pray for Divine grace or for something to be given to us. Spiritual growth requires prolonged and intensive inner spiritual work.

- My God is understanding, accepting & a great listener. My God sees us all the same and hopes we will see each other that way.
- God exists. God is love — unconditional love. God is the ultimate source of energy. While neither male nor female but in fact exhibits both male and female characteristics. Names associated include (but not limited to) Love-Wisdom - Mother Nature - Strength - Supreme Being. God exists in a very close and personal way and yet at a distance. God formed the world and exists in the beauty and complexity of plants animals, and minerals, and all throughout nature. (A day to God is millions of years in human time) God wants us to care for one another and this world. I believe that there are not yet words or understandings within human beings to comprehend God's greatness but that does not interfere with the relationship that can exist between God and human should we humans choose to engage in the relationship. God wants that relationship. I believe that God dwells all around us and within us —as the Holy Spirit -_ the soul or the spark within. God so loved us that Jesus Christ was sent to earth to teach and heal and to show us, by example, about Gods abounding love and justice for all.
- I have come to understand that the Peace of Mind is the characteristic mark of God himself and that it has always been the true goal of the considered life. I know now that the sum of all other possessions does not necessarily add up to the peace of mind, the fondest sign of his Love.
- My God is powerful, forgiving, and approachable. All things are possible for God. He is someone I can go to when troubled. I have attended United, Catholic and for the past 55 years, an Anglican church. I was always able to find God. He was wherever I was.
- -My god is kind.
-Is there God? What is God? Or are we somehow just here? These are questions I find difficult. Whatever the answer, the response for me is largely the same. We, as individuals, are part of a greater community. That community is global, and is not just the human community. We are part of a continuum of nature spanning time. As such, we have a responsibility to contribute to the well being of this community, and not to harm it. If there is a God, I am sure this would be what he wants.
-Therefore, my God is kind and caring and accepting of diversity. He cares about us as individuals but also as a community.
- My God is all knowing; but, allows me to make choices from which she/he hopes I will strive to develop into a more caring, considerate, thoughtful, active human being. Christ is her/his example towards which I endeavor to be more like.
- My God is understanding, accepting & a great listener. My God sees us all the same and hopes we will see each other that way.
- My God is a loving God who understands our human frailty and forgives and encourages us to do better. We sometimes call it our conscience but I believe it is God speaking to us. God does not protect us from all the hurts that human life gives us but gives us the strength to get through our troubles and makes us stronger and more compassionate along the journey. For me, seeing a new born baby, a small child playing, the beauty of a spring day with the birds singing and flowers beginning to explode with an array of lovely colours, the magisty of the mountains in the western provinces is all I need to believe in an awe inspiring God. He is a God of love who teaches us to love and cherish each

human being and to treat all, not only humans, but animals and our whole environment with love and respect. I don't believe our human minds or our language can fully convey who or what God is.

- I believe my God is a supreme spirit – powerful, forgiving, one I trust who will listen to me. This spirit is like the head of a family (mother/father), one who is supportive, comforting, warm, peaceful and serene.
- For me, the overwhelming characteristic of my God is one of peace – the sense of peace that comes to me when I share my gratitude to Him for all that He does for me. The sense of peace when I share my problems, the sense of peace when I feel his comfort filling my heart, the sense of peace when he shares my burdens, the sense of peace when I ask forgiveness of my sins – all of this renews me constantly.
- I believe we are told the character of our God in the bible. Christine recapped it well.
- To me God is a loving parent that gives you rules and structure for your life through his words (bible). He lets you live your life with free will although he is always there to answer any questions you have if you just listen to his soft call. I listen for it in hearing a child's voice, see it in an animal's presence, and feel it when the wind rustles through the trees and of course in prayer. He is always there with open arms to comfort you and forgive your sins. Like any good parent he wants the best for each and every one of his children and never writes any of them off.
- My God created all. He is accepting of all people and has the capacity to guide and forgive
- I must admit that I am somewhat uncomfortable with the language of "my" God, "my" faith, "my" worship or "my" community. God is so much bigger than my personal relationship with Him. God is the father of all creation, not just me and loves all of His creation equally.

Of course, this is not to say that my personal relationship with Him doesn't matter. Indeed, it is the only way that I can come to know that he is even real. The character of my God - in the way that I have come to understand Him so far- is a God who is loving, and forgiving. A love and forgiveness that was shown to me in Jesus Christ.

As a loving and accepting as God is, He is not always meek, mild and understanding. God is someone who challenges me daily to live a life of faith. Through the Holy Spirit, He makes me uncomfortable, fills me with questions and constantly asks me to re-evaluate what I am doing and urges me towards my full potential as someone who lives in Christ.

- Unconditionally Loving, Forgiving, Wise, Nonsexist, Hopeful, Loyal, Life faith, Happiness, Understanding, Gentle, Compassionate, Honesty, Mysterious, Unknown

Question 2

What is the Content of my Faith?

Responses presented to the congregations from Vision Committee members:

Fr. Phil's sermon today was a great segue into today's question of "What is the content of my faith?" I would like to start by saying that the community of St Jude's is on a journey - a faith journey and a journey of discovery and rediscovery. We need to celebrate the fact that we are a diverse congregation made up of singles, couples, young families, empty nesters, children, youth and senior citizens. Some are newer to St Jude's; some are long standing members while others, like myself, are in the middle. And we are all Anglicans!

We in the Vision Team have been talking about who St Jude's is and what makes us special. Certainly St Jude's is not just a building but a wonderful and active community of people. And this community is at a crossroads. So, do we stand at the side of the road? Do we go left or right or straight ahead?

And this is where we would like your help. We are hoping that you will spend a few minutes to answer the same questions that we are presenting to you over the next few Sundays. In the Westminster room there is a box for your responses or you can give your answers to any member of the Vision Team. If you wish, you can email them to the office. Then on May 2nd, we will be hosting a lunch after Church so we can all talk about this. We hope that you will join us because we have lots to talk about!!

Today I'm going to try to tell you about the content of my faith.

Firstly, when I was looking for a way to describe my faith, I remembered this from my childhood. The language may be old-fashioned but it describes exactly the basis of my faith. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. My faith is no more complicated than this.

Secondly, I am hugely inspired by the work of the Holy Spirit. I would venture to say that the Holy Spirit is madly swirling all around us right now. How can I (and, more importantly, we), not listen to the Lord's voice right now? In the face of uncertainty, like decreased membership at St Jude's, we have an opportunity to engage in and re-invest in our community of St Jude's. How can I (and, more importantly, we), not answer His call?

And lastly, I am humbled by the work of Mother Nature. I have been her guest in Algonquin Park on many canoe trips. I have been amazed by her serenity and awed by her ferocity. I have marveled at the sunsets and inhaled the aromas of the pine forest. I believe I have met God on these trips, in the form of a pair of loons at the start of every single lake. They greet our little community of travelers every time. I am sure they are there to guide us and look after us. They

call to us in the evenings and they even see us off at the next portage. I think that because life on these trips is so basic, that it is very easy to see God. As a result I become physically, emotionally and spiritually renewed on these trips. My soul has been lifted. Thanks be to God.

Presented to St. Jude's congregation by Vision Team Member -April 11, 2010

Recently, my daughters were challenged when required to sign a "statement of faith" for a kitchen crew job application at a local (not Anglican) summer church camp. In considering this "statement of faith" I realized that I would be unqualified to serve as a kitchen hand and scrape the remains off plates and take out the garbage. Apparently, the only candidates qualified to perform these tasks are those who profess to believe that "the human race is fallen, sinful and lost; that the shed blood of Jesus Christ provides the ONLY ground for forgiveness of sins and justification to all who receive him by faith and that only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit can they become children of God" and that the "one, holy universal church is the body of Christ".

Reading this statement transported me back to a room in my great grandmother's home that I called the "Jesus Room" because images of the crucifixion coated the walls. I hated this room. It was frightening and provided the ammunition my grandmother needed to remind me that if I was not a good girl, God was going to punish me. I mean, look what he did to Jesus (perspective of a little girl). In spite of her efforts, this petite, devout French Roman Catholic mother of 12 was unsuccessful at expanding the content of my faith. My 8-year-old brain would not allow me to consider that I could ever do enough good deeds to warrant entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Fast-forward a couple decades and many experiences later. Some of the people and events in my life caused me to revisit my faith. Luckily, the closest house of worship to where I lived in Toronto was an Anglican church with a welcoming priest who, like Father Phil, encouraged me to explore a journey of faith that was not about punishment and fear but about hope and introspection. At this point, a conscious, mature choice to follow Christ developed for me and I asked to be baptized at the age of 27. This choice was and is still based on New Testament scriptures describing a man of peace and a leader who led a life that I would like to follow, that I would like my children to follow.

When our oldest daughter, Rachel, was baptized, another inspiring Anglican priest, Father Coffin presented our new baby as a symbol of "what was good in the world, a child created in Christ's image WITHOUT sin". "Without sin", I didn't know that was possible", based on my childhood experiences. The content of my faith was growing. Admittedly, my grandmother would not be happy with the type of Christian that I have become today and I am unlikely to ever qualify for that church camp job. I have many issues with the decisions made by our higher Anglican authorities and have several questions about interpretations and subsequent divisiveness of Christian theology.

For me, the messages of Jesus became life affirming, not life depriving. Homilies from pastors like Father Phil sent messages about how to do good works, how to be inclusive, how to live a life of positive example for our children and our community, how to be humble and thankful.

Jesus Christ is the centre of MY faith and MY path to MY God.

Unlike the church camp “statement of faith”, I do not accept that it is the only way and that so-called “nonbelievers” are lost. The God I have come to love is much more open-minded and welcoming, much like the community of St. Jude’s.

Presented to St. Jude’s congregation by Vision Team Member -April 11, 2010

Responses from the Parish Questionnaires:

- My faith centers around Jesus's message, and through that message we will be lead to the Kingdom of God.
- “The Lord our God is one God” and we are to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, strength and we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, We are to put our belief into action to support and strengthen God’s creation and to work towards peace and justice for all human and the world. God has given us the gift of free will- to make our own decisions for good or ill. People are not puppets. We are given gifts and tools and how we use them, if we listen to the voice within— *is a choice.*

The bible gives information about faith. This text is a work of humans who used the “spirit within” to encourage them to write down the oral teachings and stories as they remembered and understood them to be in light of the culture, time and biases. Like any document - translated and copied several times by hand over many, many years there have been changes made — some subtle and others profound - done by humans in an attempt not to lose the content as each understood it to be. While I believe the stories and themes to be true I do not necessarily believe that they happened as they are written. Further I know today new meanings; insights and understandings are being discovered within the ancient texts.

The message of Jesus Christ *is* positive -one of love, inclusion, sharing and caring for one another. The kingdom is at hand if only we would follow this teaching.

God gave us bodies “temples” to be looked after and we are to strive towards self-healing and the healing of others. Healing includes body -mind -spirit. We are not to confuse healing with curing. The strength required may come from within, from those around us and from God.

- I believe that by following the teachings of Jesus — being more Christ like, and by working through the Holy Spirit we can and are to engage in a relationship with God.
- I believe Jesus was sent from God to teach us how to love and all the characteristics that God represents to me.

I believe we are here to be servants of God to each other, the environment and the world- bringing peace and compassion to all. We (mankind) have been made by the same Creator and everyone prays to the same God - just named differently.

My God is all-inclusive and gives unconditional love to all.

The Spirit is in all of us.

We must identify and use our Gifts for the good of all.

- To guide us in understanding ourselves, our loves, fears, griefs and ambitions. It can show how every Human Being can liberate himself from the constant assault of life's complication and find the way to greater happiness.
- Since early teens, I developed a deep belief in my religion. God has been my support through many crisis in my life, guiding me. I have learned prayers are not answered immediately but in God's time. Faith teaches patience.
- -My faith is loving, caring and accepting.
-My faith tries to understand differences.
-My faith tries to balance responsibility and compassion
-My faith is less dogmatic, and more flexible than it used to be as long as the overall tenants of love and compassion are upheld.
-My faith leads to a set of values and behaviors which guides us in knowing how to interact and be part of this larger community. This is not to say that this "moral code" is stagnant or punishing of diversity. It is guidance.
- The content comes from my upbringing and my questioning with the Bible as one of its foundations. With growth, I realize the Bible was written by man and therefore isn't literal, but, provides a guide through lessons learned and examples set.
- My faith tells me that the man Jesus had a unique relationship with God, such that even after his death his followers were empowered to carry on his mission and his teaching.
- My faith gives me no easy answers as to why there is evil and suffering in the world, but it does give me hope that one day I will see meaning in that suffering.
- My faith asks me to love and accept my neighbour as I hope to be loved and accepted, despite all our faults. It asks me to forgive any hurts that I have received.
- My faith gives me hope that death is not the final end.
- I believe in my God. I do not need the stories of his son or the things he did to keep my faith. I have seen wonderful things from ordinary people and I have faith. My God has made these things happen.
- My faith centers around Jesus' message, and through that message we will be lead to the Kingdom of God.
- I believe in my God. I do not need the stories of his son or the things he did to keep my faith. I have seen wonderful things from ordinary people and I have faith. My God has made these things happen.
- I see God when I see small babies and children playing or sleeping. I feel God on a Caribbean island beach, in the quiet wilderness or listening to the birds and in my own back yard. I feel God in our service when we sing the Lord's Prayer, Gloria and the Sanctus (Lamb of God) before communion.
- My faith does not depend on the bible teachings of either the birth, the crucifixion or the rising of Jesus from death. I really don't know how things developed during the life of Jesus but the particulars don't matter to me. I believe in a loving God and do believe in the divinity of Jesus, but how it happened is not important to me. Jesus taught us to love one another at a time when it was not the custom to love your enemies, the Romans. He

told parables of the “good Samaritan” and the “prodigal son” to illustrate what unconditional love it.

- I feel satisfied, contented in my faith which I trust and believe in, without proof.
- The content of my faith is a loving and sharing God. I do not think of God as exclusionary but rather inclusive, loving all providing us with a wonderful world in which to live. I do not see God as a strict disciplinarian but as a loving God who is there to help when I stumble and provide guidelines, through the Bible, for me.
- I believe in God the Father almighty creator of heaven and earth. He was, he is and he always will be. God is the skies above, the ground below and everything good in between. God is everywhere if you are willing to see Him. I believe in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord. He was sent to forgive our sins; therefore we must ask for forgiveness and return to good ways. I believe in the Holy Spirit. God gave us all a soul for the Holy Spirit to fill and the free will to allow the Holy Spirit in or not. I believe that this is also where your conscience is created. Our soul is what connects us to others because I also truly believe that no man is ever an island.
- I believe my God is always present. Like the poem, *Footprints in the Sand* sometimes it doesn't feel that God is there but He is sometimes carrying us through difficult times. At others, He is ahead of me, showing me the way. Sometimes, He is behind me, giving me a little push and the courage to forge ahead. Sometimes He is beside me, understanding, accepting and celebrating with me! Everything works out in the end. I have faith in God.
- Like everything else in these questions, the content of my faith is intimately connected with my understanding of God. Essentially, my faith is based on the simple expression of "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again".
There are all kinds of nuances in my faith but each of those three tenants are important for me. The fact that we proclaim and testify to Jesus crucified, means that there is NOTHING that God will not do for us. He is willing to give His own self, to endure torture, pain, humiliation and death, so that God's promise of forgiveness can be (and is) fulfilled.
More than that, the fact that the Word became flesh means that there is no pain or emotion which God himself has not felt, and so He will always be able to identify with us and share in our struggles, our pain and our suffering.
The message of Christ Risen-which we celebrate every Sunday-is the heart of the entire Gospel. Death and darkness are nothing compared with Light and Life. Sin and despair are nothing compared to forgiveness and hope. The resurrection is about the impossible becoming possible, and of transformation from shame and doubt into something new and wonderful. Change from our old ways IS possible.
Christ coming means that we live in hope that God's reign and justice as an inevitable reality, not some trumped up ideal. The Kingdom of God has been inaugurated Jesus' mission and it is up to us - His disciples- to go out and make disciples, to go work in the fields. One of my favourite quotes comes from Mahatma Ghandi who said that we are" to be the change that we want to see in the world".
I believe that this sentiment is central to what we are to do and be as God's children.
- Comfort, and Reassurance

Question 3

What is the Purpose of My Worship?

Responses presented to the congregations from Vision Committee members:

To answer this question, I ask myself, "Why do I want come to Church?"

I would like to share with you the reasons why I want to attend St Jude's. I believe that of the 4 questions which the Vision committee is reviewing, this is the one question which should have the most diverse answers across our congregation.

The purpose of our worship changes as our lives change. This is what makes the main task of the vision committee particularly difficult. It is important that you share your answers with the committee to help us come up with ideas to create an environment for others to want to do the same - to want to attend St Jude's church week after week.

These are some of the reasons which keep bringing me to St Jude's week after week:

Music – I come on Thursdays and Sundays to share music with others and all for the Glory of God.

For my Children – because they know no different than to come to church on Sunday mornings. – I think is has something to do with the Sunday School program (I might be a little biased in that regard though).

Fellowship – I come for the opportunity to be in company of others who share the same faith and the same purpose of worship.

Liturgy – I am here to listen and consider how the experiences of Jesus' life relate to today's society.

Comfort of Traditions – For me, some of the traditions which we share here at St Jude's, and typical of most other Anglican churches bring me comfort. Comfort in doing the same things that my parents taught me to do. Like singing familiar hymns, drinking from the communion chalice, acknowledging the cross behind the altar.

Commitment and Involvement – Another primary reason which brings me here week after week is knowing my role in our congregation and realizing that other people count on me being here.

These are some of my reasons for coming to St Jude's every week, and that is how I define the purpose of my worship. I am sure that many of you share some of the same reasons, and many of you have very different purposes to your worship.

Presented to St. Jude's congregation by Vision Team Member -April 18, 2010

I come to worship as a member of this community of people, this parish of St. Jude, to give thanks through praise and prayer for this wonderful world in which we live and for the love of family and friends.

Joining with you, I come to offer up prayers for those in need, and to try to develop a greater understanding and awareness of that other reality which we call God. We seek that sense of the other through silence, through meditation, through the Eucharist, through music, the liturgy and through the friendly touch of our neighbours in the pew.

I have an intimation of that reality as I see the light streaming through the rose window, where the ship of St. Jude, the ship of our life journey, is sailing through uncharted waters, but always surrounded by the light of Christ and the flames of the Holy Spirit.

As a reminder of the purpose of my worship, I cannot express it better than to quote some of the words of the General Thanksgiving, words which have stood the test of time and resounded through the ages. "Father of all mercies, we give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness . . . Give us such an awareness of your mercies that we may show forth your praise in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service . . . "

This is the purpose of my worship –

Presented to St. Jude's congregation by Vision Team Member -April 18, 2010

Responses from the Parish Questionnaires:

- I come to church to sing, to meet others and enjoy a place to worship. I also know it is not the only place I worship. I give thanks each and every day for the gifts I have received. I feel I am a very lucky man and I thank God for these gifts. I worship to ask how I can repay others for his gift to me.
- To provide support to others and to glean the support required for me to follow the teachings of Jesus and so to strengthen the path to a right relationship with God. God does not expect perfection but only a willingness to try. The worship provides an opportunity to feel some comfort with tradition but also some tension with the liturgy and the interpretation and meaning of the texts as it relates to life today. It also should provide a safe place to explore, learn, and try new ways to foster and encourage development of spirituality. Use of known and evolving ways within the worship service can be varied from tradition to new age for music, prayers, praises, meditation, silence etc. The purpose then is to discern and reinforce understandings while opening the door to developing new and different ways of following the teachings of Jesus in order to foster the development of a relationship with God and a deeper spirituality. Perhaps to provide an opportunity to think and ponder "what would Jesus do if he were here today in this situation?"
- Individual
 - To connect with God in a tangible way and to feel his love.
 - To refresh my spirit each week by focusing on "non-worldly" thoughts and feelings.
 - To give thanks on a regular basis for the many blessings in my life, and in the world.

- Giving thanks needs to be done regularly so as to avoid dwelling on the negative.
- To take some guidance from the homily on matters of daily life, and on dealing with internal struggles.
- To be inspired / comforted by the music.

Community

- To connect with a loving and accepting community
- To support members of the community in their personal struggles.
- To pray for others.
- So that I may stay focused, centred and present. To learn and grow spiritually inwardly and outwardly (through Jesus's message), and always give Thanks.
- I believe the community plays a very important part in my life. We gain strength and wisdom from being together.
It is an opportunity for all to show true caring and compassion for our own church community.
I come to church to pray, sing, listen and care - which in turn gives me hope, love, alleviates fears, security, peace and I gain wisdom.
I'm not one for pomp and ceremony - so robes, carrying staffs and wearing Miters doesn't do it for me.
I would like more time for quiet and meditation. Most of us are very busy in our lives and this may be the only quiet time we get all week. I feel once I enter the sanctuary, it should have a feeling of peace and quiet - prayerful.
Some Sundays it is very noisy with people talking - catching up with their neighbours or making the rounds to see their friends. We also have very talented parishioners who give their time to play beautiful music for us before the service starts and it is so noisy you can't hear it - I also feel it is very rude of others. Talking with others is for coffee hour time (by the way coffee in the narthex is great I think we are catching people who wouldn't normally stay).
I feel that the money we spend on flowers could be spent more wisely. We can still have a donation in memory of your loved one which could be put towards other necessities - music- the youth etc. We could light a candle for that person, or communion that Sunday would be in loving memory of _____.
- I think PowerPoint would be wonderful, then our liturgy could be more spontaneous. We need to get away from the books and get into the worship!! I'm all for contemporary music and there again to get away from the books.
- I come for the opportunity to share faith and worship with other people and build relationships.
- I came to church to refuel. During the week, I, like many others, occasionally stray from Christian thoughts. By coming to church, I can pray for forgiveness and strength to do better in coming week. It's also a place to connect with my church family.
- -Purpose of my worship is to nourish and affirm my faith. It has a sermon and supporting readings which deliver important messages and cause me to contemplate. In a world where material and superficial values are actively pushed to us all, it is a place where values of love, compassion and caring for our fellow man and God's creation are reinforced. It is a place where standards by which we should endeavor to lead our lives

are conveyed.

- The purpose of my worship is also to uplift my spirit. The message of love and hope, fellowship, and music play important roles in this. Few things can lift the spirit as can music. Music which really reaches you and which makes you sing, and I mean really sing, uplifts you. The music at St. Jude's does not do this. At St. Jude's, the choir sings, most other people stand and half-heartedly stumble along, awkwardly.

-To be reaffirming, the messages need to be congruent. The message of the sermon, the scriptures and the responsive readings all reinforce the same message. Responsive readings which are wrote and espouse a very literal interpretation which I do not support, and which are not consistent with the sermon, are far from reaffirming. The make me feel hypocritical for repeating them. I have no desire to be hypocritical.

- To feel the support of my St. Jude's family in prayer, song, and hearing the homily so that we may try to live a more Christ-like life in the society in which we live knowing others have similar values and goals.
- So that I may stay focused, centred and present. To learn and grow spiritually inwardly and outwardly (through Jesus's message), and always give Thanks.
- The purpose of my worship is renewal. I treasure my Anglican traditions, they are the signposts for me to talk to God, to ask for forgiveness, to celebrate God's goodness and healing powers.
- To gather with Christians to share our faith and support each other. To hear the word of God and the homily, putting the readings in context of what was happening at the time and how it relates to us today. Some thoughts to take home and support for the week to come. Give reverence to God.
- I attend church weekly and at time more because I do believe in a God of love. He has given me a great life, not always trouble free, but great none the less. I believe I am well blessed in that I have never had to face ill health, hunger, homelessness, unemployment or any great tragedy and I need to keep aware at all times how blessed I am. Attending church and worshiping my God is a way to keep me from ever forgetting or not taking for granted my blessed life.
- The purpose of my worship is to pray for those needing help including myself. I thank my God for the comfort I feel. I want to show respect, honour and reverence.
- To gather with others in the presence of the Lord to praise, worship, thank, and ask for forgiveness and blessings for those in need.
- It is a tradition in my life. It feels right and a part of what we do. The purpose is to be able to give thanks, for all I have and have had. It is to ask God to help me be a good Christian. It is also to pray for others and to be with others.
- The purpose of my worship is to gather in the community of the faithful throughout the world. I come to give thanks to God for my life, to hear His Word, to be taught and challenged, to pray for the world and those in my immediate life, and to be fed and transformed by the Eucharist.
- To share thoughts which lets go of stress
- To see our friends
- For charity
- Laughter and fun

Responses collected from group discussion at Town Hall Meeting –May 2, 2010:

TABLE 1

- disappointed that we skipped the first 2 questions
- live out teachings of Christ but have appreciation for all other religions, bring acceptance of other faiths/religions into our worship
- impact on personal
- ongoing process
- orchestra analogy: different instruments combine together to make beautiful music
- even though there may be various viewpoints, the teaching of the scriptures bring us back, bring us direction
- united in our humanity & our struggles
- one week away from Christ makes one weak

TABLE 2

- worship nourishes us and affirms our faith
- hear scripture
- standard for living
- way of uplifting our spirits
- music not always congruent with our beliefs; music is a challenge, needs to be simpler, updated
- older generation who live with strict guidelines and younger generation wants more freedom
- creeds may be too restrictive; people interpret different ways; rote- need to be careful of this
- liturgy 2 different services? Maybe can honour both? I.e traditional- following the prayer book and modern- active music, more freedom, drama

TABLE 3

- story of farmer- keeps your fire burning, nourished, wisdom for week ahead
- contact with group of people, social aspect
- to be needed i.e jobs you do at church
- communication with fellow parishioners
- quiet time to pray- peoples lives are very busy and we don't always take time
- need more meditation time during church service

TABLE 4

- connectedness with other people in congregation
- supports our evolving faith in God
- hearing different people speak about reading helps to see things differently
- don't think the Bible is a rulebook but rather a guide
- renewing energy, someplace to you can go to build your spirit
- important to attend regularly to have positive influences in our lives
- time to sit quietly and listen to music, reflective time
- to be part of a community
- "a true family"
- greater understanding of God- make a connection
- supports within the community
- themes that come up in service i.e taking care of the world, those kinds of reinforced messages
- safe place to explore, learn and try ways to foster and develop spirituality
- openness to change- a balance between old & new
- to interact with people of all ages, to share different perspectives, different needs and meanings

-all have something to offer

TABLE 5

- community of faith
- the great thanksgiving
- in our busy lives, we may not pray enough and attending worship gives us an opportunity to make sure that we do
- we can't be self-righteous just because we do attend church when others may not
- the Easter service this year was a great example of everyone in our community coming together
- have a quiet time with God in a world with so many distractions
- we're challenged

TABLE 6

- God represents human condition and instinct toward common good
- written service speaks to some but not others
- service should have celebration and be uplifting "batteries charged"
- church should be a safe haven

TABLE 7

- 3 generations represented but same perspective
- Youth Sunday- more youth involvement in Youth Sunday to help build their faith going into adulthood
- importance of fellowship among all age groups
- more fun activities, family activities
- Sunday is a kick start for the week
- grounds us after a hectic week
- helps build core values

TABLE 8

- should be interesting; keep people engaged
- clear language, bridge gap between readings and life
- music needs to be more engaging, like hymns we all know
- new, contemporary music creates experience, focus on children
- community- people who share in faith
- comfortable, peaceful

TABLE 9

- different age groups comfortable together and isn't that what its all about?
- also wanted to answer all four questions
- want a purpose to these town halls, when are they going to end?
- create Easter Sunday every Sunday
- Holy Spirit is here and felt as one
- doors open

TABLE 10

- spiritual growth
- worship as a community to make your faith stronger and enrich your life. How do we do this?
- exchange of religious ideals, hearing opinions amongst ourselves. How do we do this?
- pastor needs to visit and connect more with parishioners, more emotional support. What is happening with pastoral care team?

-Anglican music -Traditional vs Modern. Traditional service vs generic service still a problem
-Should we have 2 different services, one traditional, one modern?

Question 4

What is the function of your Community?

Responses presented to the congregations from Vision Committee members:

To me the function of my community is what I give and what I get from the community that I am growing in faith with. My community, look around. This is my community. The building is nice but that has even changed in my time here. People come and go and many of the people who were here when I was young are no longer at the church for many different reasons.

I have the opportunity to view this community from a unique perspective. When you look around you will see there is a very small population of young adults and sometimes it's only me. Others have asked me "why don't you find a church with people your own age?" and "wouldn't you be happier with more people your own age?" Yes, of course I would! However I get what I need here.

There are three main aspects that make up my community here at St. Jude. They are: Children and youth ministries, the music programs, and sharing my faith through service.

As some of you know I am a child and youth worker so supporting an enriching environment for our young people to grow up in is a passion of mine. I am able to live this out through helping out down stairs, teaching Sunday school, being involved in activities for children and running events like this weekend's 30 hour famine.

I enjoy music and fellowship that the music programs offered here. I know we have just recently lost our choir director but our music community is still here. This group of people shares something special with me. We work together to do our best and create a final product we are proud of.

The third main aspect that makes up my community here at St. Jude is the opportunities available to make a difference in the larger community. Things like the St. John's dinners, peace concerts, larger worship services and prayer groups. These and other such opportunities allow me to live out this facet of my faith. When these pieces come together they make up the function of my community.

Presented to St. Jude's congregation by Vision Team Member -April 25, 2010

Before I answer the question; what is the function of my community? I feel I have to share my definition of community. My definition comes from Paul's letter to the Galatians. In that letter Paul speaks of all of us belonging to Christ and that we are equal in the Christian community because we share a common belief.

Paul states in Chapter 3 verses 27 to 29 "All baptized in Christ, you have clothed yourselves in Christ and there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all are one in Christ". For me, community is a diverse group of people that share a common belief in Christ and because of this belief we are free from the barriers that separate us.

What is the function of my community? This took some thought ... But I was able to find my answer.

Let me share one quick story: I was about 12 years old. My father, a devout Anglican, advised me it was time to get confirmed. At that time I had no idea what he meant, but father knows best. So began my Anglican journey. I joined the local Anglican Church and quickly became a member of the youth group. There I met Father Ken Lee, the youth group leader, who inspired me and later became my mentor. After a short time, I became heavily involved. I attended weekly bible studies and participated in many community events. I became active in the church community and participated in all aspects of the church to ensure it was vibrant and successful. The fellowship, friendship and life lessons I learned from the group sustained me through my teenage years and helped me to select a career path of helping people in need. This was an incredible and exciting journey in Christ.

I never really understood the life lesson of this experience, until now. I joined a community of people that shared my faith in Christ. Together we learned how our faith can help and guide us. These lessons inspired us to do good works in Christ's name. These works were performed in our church, community, academic and personal surroundings.

So to answer the question, for me ... the function of my community is to do works through faith. We strengthen our faith by coming together as a community and studying the sacred stories; learning lessons that help us in managing the challenges of the ever-changing world. Once inspired we are called to do works in all aspects and in all forms. These works can be done individually, in community, in our professional or personal lives; where ever we are called to help.

Today I believe, due to the fast pace of our lives, it's difficult for us to come together as a group and undertake collective works for the betterment of society. While I do think this is an important function of our community, I believe we have another. We need to use the lessons we learn to make an impact on the lives we touch, so we can be true ambassadors for Christ.

Presented to St. Jude's congregation by Vision Team Member -April 25, 2010

Responses from the Parish Questionnaires:

- St Jude is a place where everyone should be welcome. It should be a place of fun, a place of worship, a place of belonging.
- The church family is an important part of my life. The community provides a venue for fellowship, support and growth. Within the church family we have members from the very young to the elderly and everything between. Each offers others a different insight as

each is at a different stage of spirituality development and understanding. All members are different and yet they are all equal. Each member contributes in their own unique way. The opportunity and insights to share a faith through service and to make a difference in the life of another is powerful. We share a belief in the message of God's unconditional love brought from Jesus. The community provides a human support to further the teachings of Jesus Christ for the benefit of others.

There is more than one way to obtain a goal. For me it is to follow Christ and to help me contribute to my fellow human, my world, and myself as I work towards developing an ongoing relationship with God. The Anglican approach works for me — and hopefully for others on the same path. It is an open minded and ever evolving approach that encourages exploring, thinking and asking difficult questions in order to foster a deeper meaning and spirituality.

Each member within the community can be a welcoming ambassador that supports the mission of the church by sharing their unique gifts for the benefit of all.

- To realize Jesus' message in our lives. Not just to talk about it. But live it/be it.
- Outreach for the neighbourhood and city of course, but I feel there is much we could do for our own parishioners (seniors and disabled). Maybe we could have a sign-up sheet for them - maybe call it "helping hands". Examples of needs: cut lawns, shopping, flowerbeds, rides, baked goods, snow shoveling, and just calling people on the phone showing they care. I feel each person in our church, no matter how old or how young should be taking on some kind of responsibility for others in our community and in return they will receive a sense of pride, ownership and belonging.
- Is assuring us the safety and as citizens have the right to educate and worship in the faith of our choice and to feel comfortable in partaking in events in the community and working together as neighbours.
- I trust this refers to church community which I feel should be like extended family. I hope we can learn to listen better, try to be aware if someone seems to need help and do our best to help in any way we can. As a Christian, all should try to help whenever possible and however possible to make our church a friendlier, more compassionate community.
- The function of my community is two-fold. It is a self-selected group of like-minded people in which I can feel supported, not alone in the larger world in my beliefs. It is also a beacon. It is a beacon to others who have or yearn for similar spiritual fulfillment. It can also be a positive force in the world in doing good and showing good. By showing good, I mean demonstrating to others that love and compassion are values held by many and this is how many are trying to live their lives.
- My community is here to support its members in their worship and everyday life. Through its involvement in outreach of various types, it helps to guide me in my involvement with the greater community of London and frequently beyond to other parts of Canada and the world.
- If "community" you mean our church, then we should be friendly, open, a welcoming neighbour, helpful, giving information, assisting in the health and welfare of the homeless, the poor and the working poor.
- The function of my community is support – firstly, support for its church members and from its members. The community's support for its members is always visible in a time

when all come together and share the load or to celebrate an important occasion.

Secondly, after the church members, my community supports the larger community, our city, province and our extended neighbours. The function of my community is to be visible and provide an opportunity for others to learn of God's goodness.

- One of the reasons I seldom miss a Sunday is to meet with my friends and share the past and future week's activities and to make sure everyone is well. I am part of the Mission Committee as I feel we should be supporting the needs of others. I am very disappointed that St. Jude's outreach and giving's to Missions including Daily Bread is so small. Mission is greatly overlooked here. We have trouble getting people to volunteer for the Nearly New Shop or even the new initiatives of the garden plot. If we are not on earth to help others what are we here for? What would Jesus do?
- I believe that our function is, firstly to worship our God with prayer, reading scripture and with beautiful music. Secondly, to support one another in our journey. We may not all believe God in just the same way, but that is okay, but we much respect each other's opinion and belief. As we go through difficult times in our lives we should be supporting one another with caring, love and compassion. We are also called to care for those in need. Visit a sick or aged person, help to feed those that are hungry, provide warm clothing and blankets for those that are cold, pray with or for someone that is lost.
- My community members are the people I reach out to. These people include those that I can help, those that can help me, and those that come into my life for one of many unknown reasons. My community members are made up of every age, gender, race, culture, social status and economic status. St. Jude's doesn't represent this range of community members well and I would love to see that grow over the next few years.
- It acts as a large family. A family you can celebrate with, laugh with and cry with. It makes you feel valued and respected. My community is also a place to be able to work together to help others.
- The function of my community-more particularly at St Jude's- is a place to come together in mutual fellowship. As a church community, I think it is important to build each other up, and to support one another in any way we can. Additionally, I think we are called to reach out beyond the pews to the wider community and to be witnesses and live God's abundance and grace.

This witnessing includes everything from evangelism and outreach, to pastoral care and teaching within our own community. As such, the community that I am part of isn't constrained or concerned with budgets or what is practical but of meeting the needs of people in the community both **where they are** and **according to their needs**.

Does this mean we should be fiscally irresponsible and not worry about money? Of course not! But at the same time, it should not be the deciding factor. The primary concern is how we give life to each other and the people around us.

- Spread the Word, Serving, Good Samaritan, Having your own opinion, Using values, Being a good friend, Support, To teach us.