

AN AGREEMENT TO ENTER REGIONAL MINISTRY BETWEEN THE PARISHES OF

ST ATHANASIUS ORILLIA

ST DAVID ORILLIA

ST GEORGE FAIRVALLEY

ST JAMES ORILLIA

ST JOHN'S WAVERLEY

WASHAGO & PRICE'S CORNERS

(ST. PAUL, WASHAGO, ST. LUKE, PRICE'S CORNER & GOOD SAMARITAN, PORT STANTON)

Prepared by the Huronia Congregational Working Group

Acts 2:44-47

All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

This outlines an agreement for a regionalized ministry of the parishes of St James Orillia, St David Orillia, St Athanasius Orillia, Washago-Price's Corners (St. Paul's, Washago and St. Luke's, Price's Corners and Good Samaritan, Port Staton), St George Fairvalley, and St John Waverley. The plan originated in 2019 with an invitation from Canon Janet Marshall, Director of Congregational Development, with the support of Bishop Andrew Asbil, to discuss the future of Anglican ministry in the Huronia area. More recently, the Huronia Congregational Working Group drafted this agreement, facilitated by Canon Laura Walton (Canon Administrator for the North Territory) and Joy Packham, ODT (Congregational Development Volunteer), with support from Bishop Riscylla Shaw, Suffragan Bishop for the North Territory.

This Agreement will come to the congregations for their consideration in June 2024. Each congregation will have the opportunity to prayerfully reflect on the reasons for regionalization and the specifics of the agreement and then vote in a special vestry. If the vote is successful, the documents will go to the College of Bishops and then to Synod Council for approval.

People, Geography and Opportunities

In 2019, the total average Sunday attendance was 322 people in eight congregations (Port Stanton being summer only) in Orillia and the surrounding area. In this group, the farthest church from Orillia is St John, Waverley, which is approximately forty kilometers away. The region is made up of urban, village, tourist, and cottage areas. It also includes the Chippewas of Rama First Nations community.

The future of ministry within this region will depend on our ability to identify and respond to opportunities for meaningful connections with both current members and those with whom we are not currently in a relationship, the broader community, and seekers. We recognize that there are opportunities to further develop ministry through intentional outreach, pastoral care, spiritual nurture and wellness programs, and new forms of worship.

Why Regional Ministry

Through regionalisation, we will be stronger together. We will have the resources and energy to continue our ministry of offering worship, pastoral care, education and outreach to our congregations and communities.

There is a pressing need in the Huronia area to prioritize human and financial resources. Several churches were being led by retired priests whose contracts were completed in 2023. The Incumbent of St James, Orillia is the only non-retired priest in the area, while Canon Laura Walton is overseeing the other parishes as the Canon 24 Administrator for all but St James and St Athanasius.

A regionalized approach will create a new arrangement among the churches and clerics (active and retired) so that vibrant and sustainable ministry can continue in the Huronia region. As a region we will have access to:

- priests, lay leaders and volunteers to support worship, pastoral care, and other ministries.
- a stronger pastoral care program, connecting especially with people who are isolated, in care, or homebound, offering a significant ministry to shut-ins and seniors.
- increased work with youth, children, and young families.
- more administrative and tech support to enhance the ministries in the area.

- congregational and clerical presence for funerals, weddings, baptisms, and confirmations.
- a supportive team ministry, bringing our congregations and communities a broader range of gifts and skills for ministry and mission, opportunities for collaboration, and collegiality for the clergy.

Of special note: offering full-time employment helps in the recruitment of clergy and other lay staff.

Finally, it has become evident that in order to sustain our broad Anglican presence in the Huronia area, we are being called to work together. We believe and trust that God has a plan for us in our life together as witnesses to Christ.

A PLAN FOR REGIONAL MINISTRY

Terminology

Parish Management Team – A new team that is made up of a warden from each congregation, the Incumbent, the associate and the treasurer. It will be chaired by the Incumbent.

Ministry Team - Team made up of the Incumbent, the associate, deacons, lay staff and volunteers that will focus on liturgy. This may also include musicians.

Congregations – We will use this term to refer to the 8 parishes involved in the regionalization. Using this term will help clarify whether it is the new parish that is being referred to or the 8 original congregations.

Team Lead – The incumbent.

Huronia Congregational Working Group – Representatives for the 6 parishes (8 congregations) that met, discussed and created this regionalization document.

An Incremental Approach

This is an agreement to enter a regional ministry arrangement that has been discussed with the congregations as Model 2 (New Parish Model - appendix A): the creation of one new entity that is inclusive of all eight congregations. This arrangement will begin on a date recommended by the Huronia Congregational Working Group and need to be approved by each congregation in a special vestry vote. At the end of 2 years, this ministry will be evaluated to address any significant changes that may be needed. Problem solving, course corrections and best practices will be learned and made along the way as issues and opportunities arise.

Over the next 2 years the parishes will intentionally and strategically work more closely together to share resources. This will serve to sustain our ministry and mission within our smaller communities and create opportunities for new missional ministries to connect with the neighbours.

Each congregation will retain their own separate corporations, CRA status, and bank accounts. Further discussion at both the Management Team and Congregational levels will be held, if any change is needed. Looking ahead, this might mean that the church communities eventually come together in principle to form a single ministry area with multiple sites, with one corporation or governance structure; however, that is not a decision that can be made in this document. Any such rearrangement will need its own discernment process and will follow Diocesan canons.

This is a plan that is flexible and focuses on teamwork, communication, sharing of resources, and organic conversations both at the Parish and Congregational levels as this ministry moves forward.

Ministry Team

The Regional Ministry Team will be resourced by a Ministry Team of priests, deacons, lay staff, and volunteers. St. James' current incumbent will be the Team Lead. An associate priest and possibly one other staff (position description to be determined by vision and need) will provide pastoral, program and administrative support within the ministry area.

The Ministry Team will function throughout the entire regionalized area. The Team Lead will take on the role of Incumbent in all congregations and will collaborate with the wardens.

Undertaking planning together, recognizing and honouring the culture and particularities of each worshipping community, the Ministry Team will deliver sacramental, liturgical, missional, and pastoral ministries in all the congregations and communities (e.g. Seniors homes).

A schedule will be kept for all the clergy to rotate through the churches so that each congregation has experience of all the Ministry Team members occasionally.

Each congregation will have a designated pastor (either priest or deacon) whom they will know best, and who will be available for individual pastoral needs. This cleric may be shared with other congregations but will be a designated point person for a particular church.

Governance

Parish Management Team

The Parish Management Team will be made up of one churchwarden from each Congregation, the Incumbent, a vestry clerk, and treasurer. The congregational church warden will be the liaison to the Advisory Board. There will be 2 wardens for the Parish Management Team (separate from the congregational wardens). They can be chosen/elected from those on the Parish Management Team: The Parish Management Team will meet monthly. If a congregation cannot fill their warden roles, then discussions with the Incumbent about supportive oversight will take place.

The Parish Management Team is responsible for:

1. Communications and relationship-building among the congregations.
2. Coordination of activities within the Regional Ministry.
3. Identifying new opportunities that emerge; visioning and planning for regional initiatives within the ministry area.
4. Making decisions about regional programming, and making recommendations to the various Advisory Boards) regarding actions and decisions needed to develop the regional ministry. Advisory boards will meet regularly and link back to the Parish Management Team through their warden.

5. Check in with each other and the congregations regularly to assess how ministry is going and problem-solve as needed.
6. The Team will receive reports from treasurers on their work to integrate financial systems.
7. The Team will review and build a Parish budget for the regional ministry separate from the congregational budgets.

Congregational Governance

The following outlines congregational governance and reporting that will be established at the beginning of the regionalized ministry and reviewed as it proceeds.

- i) Each congregation will continue to have a corporation of cleric (the incumbent of the new parish) and two churchwardens in accordance with Canon 13. Each will have an annual Vestry meeting. This can be amended if a parish wishes to divest itself of its corporation and have the Parish Regional Ministry Management Team function in place of their corporation. This does not mean that they lose their voice in parish matters and they can still hold positions on the Management Team.
- ii) Annual Returns (Incumbent's Annual Statistical Return and Churchwardens' Parochial Return) will be filed separately by congregation.
- iii) Each vestry will continue to elect Synod Members.

All governance duties of the Incumbent/Priest in Charge will be conducted by the Team Lead and/or their designate. This includes attending meetings of advisory board, corporation, vestry, and synod. It also takes account of required and regular reporting to the Diocese including the annual report and assuring compliance with Diocesan Canons and episcopal and Synod Council directives.

Mission, Evangelism and Discipleship:

Missional ministries will be developed to reach and serve people within the Huronia Region. Our priorities have been outlined in our regionalization meetings and include:

1. A clear social media presence for the region and each congregation to support local ministry.
2. Shared volunteer leadership, drawn from the congregations within the region. Together, we can be more effective in reaching more people, sharing God's love and generosity more widely throughout the region.
3. Seasonal missional opportunities can be identified and developed.
4. Work with youth, children, and young families. This includes Sunday School, VBS, outreach meals.
5. Increased ministry for shut ins, seniors, and long-term care facilities. Consistent visiting and support for those looking for pastoral care.
6. Regular bible studies and other Christian Education opportunities.
7. Increased music ministry opportunities.

Finances

Each congregation continues to steward their own finances and investments, with future budgets to be determined and discussed by the Parish Management Team and the Congregational Advisory Board. Each will continue to pay their allotment and stipend portion for 2024 as per their budgets, with 2025 to be determined by the Parish Management Team. Currently we are estimating the availability of approximately \$125,000 over and above the current salary provided to the Incumbent of St. James for 2025. This does not include grants or diocesan funds.

There is no equation/formula used for payments when the congregations come together as this new entity: Christian charity will be the standard for giving (Acts 2:44-47). We will require an all-parties discussion with St. James to facilitate a reduction in their staffing costs since they will be moving away from their current arrangement of a full time incumbent. That does not mean they will not contribute to staffing but a portion of their funds will be deployed differently to reduce their staffing costs and allowing those funds to support other congregational requirements.

Initial Expectations are as follows:

- The expectation is that all congregations maintain their 2024 budget heading into 2025 with the understanding there may be an increase in offertory as this new structure takes shape.
- Allotment and stipend costs will be paid to the Diocese by each congregation and then distributed through the payroll system. These costs do not include programming or hospitality that may be done by the congregations individually or together.
- During the first 2 years we will begin standardizing financial statements and aligning processes and begin using the same software and nomenclature in budget lines. We will look for opportunities to streamline and reduce the workloads of the volunteers. No one will be forced out of a position.
- The congregations will have their treasurers work together with the Parish Management Team to integrate bookkeeping and manage shared expenses. They will share financial information and report regularly.
- Each church's finances will be accounted for independently.
- There will be matters of concern for each congregation on its own to look after financially e.g. property repairs. No congregation will be held financially responsible for any other congregation's property unless there is discussion within the Parish Management Team to work together on a project.

Worship & Pastoral Ministries

There will be Sunday services of either Morning Prayer or Eucharist at each congregation with special accommodation made for our summer church. There will be a weekly meeting of the Ministry Team to work on services that would be consistent across the parishes, understanding that our Lutheran/Anglican congregation (Appendix B) would have their services as per usual. Worship decisions will necessarily remain with the clergy, who will consider the congregations they are serving.

Duties of sacramental worship, preaching, education and pastoral care will be provided by the Ministry Team by mutual agreement and licensed permissions. Developing and maintaining the worship roster will be done by the Team Lead in consultation with the Ministry Team.

Ongoing Discussions to be had with the Parish Management Team

1. Extended pastoral care in long term care homes
2. Sunday schedules
3. Joint programming
 - a. Children and youth
 - b. Seniors
 - c. Shut ins.
 - d. Outreach
 - e. Bible studies and other Christian Ed such as Alpha
4. Safe Church that includes Sexual Misconduct Training will continue and kept up to date.
5. Building assessment and possible sales
6. Joint administration
7. Accounting software update will happen as directed by the timeline established by the Parish Management Team.
8. Music ministry.