



Church of St. John the Evangelist

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Parish Profile

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God's Call – Our Call

St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church in Elora, Ontario is seeking a new Rector. We, that is those of us who make up the community of St. John's, are confident that the Lord has already chosen the right person. With this Profile and through prayer, we aim to connect with that person. Let us tell you about us.

This Profile contains five sections:

1. **Who we are – Unity of Worship and Service with Diversity**

At our core, we engage in the sacred acts of worship and service. Each infuses the other with meaning and action. Each is an essential character of our past and our future.

2. **Where we live, worship, and serve**

We come from all over, a “virtual” parish, drawn together in one place, in one community, united to glorify God, nurtured in worship, prepared to serve.

3. **How we get things done**

We are blessed with resources, prudently managed, with extensive volunteers able to respond in the affirmative to God's unique calling of us as stewards of our particular heritage.

4. **What lies ahead**

We are grounded in the worship of God - adoration, attention to his word, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving – and we seek to grow in our participation in Christ's ministry, corporately and individually. Inspired by God the Holy Spirit and guided by the Rector-to-be, we look forward with hope to new opportunities and challenges, as we bear witness to the advancing of Christ's reign.

5. **The Rector we seek**

We invite a lover of God's Word, a priestly servant, to come and live among us, worship with us, pray with us, and equip us to serve, for the glory of God.



1. Who we are – Unity of Worship and Service with Diversity



We are a worshipping community

To engage with this Parish is to be drawn into the sacred act of worship. Our sacrifice of praise is the focus of our community and the foundation upon which all our ministry is built. Our recent Survey placed the communal act of worship as the defining mark of mission for St. John's. It is central to who we are as a community – a gathering of hungry people, feeding on the Word of God, expressed in the sacraments, in choral music, and through excellent preaching. This act of community worship, whether it is three Sunday services, mid-week services, weekday mattins, choral evensong or special services, is our foundation: theologically, ecclesiastically, financially, and culturally. We have chosen to share the ancient practice of choral liturgical worship as an act of joy, of obedience, and of stewardship for future generations. It defines the unique character of who we are called to be, as a community, in Christ.

Our regular services include:

Monday – Friday	8:45-9:15	Morning Prayer
Midweek	10:30 am	Eucharist
Thursday	6:30 pm	Evensong (occasional)
Sunday	8:00 am	Eucharist
	9:00 am	Contemporary Eucharist, BAS
	11:00 am	Choral Eucharist/Mattins alternately, BCP



Under the direction of Organist and Choirmaster, Noel Edison, sung BCP services are led by a fully professional choir which offers various Mass settings, canticles, anthems, and motets. We are committed to four-part Anglican Psalm chanting and to plainsong chant. To reach beyond our boundaries, the Parish Choir has made numerous recordings of Psalms and anthems for international release. Special musical services draw visitors from a wide geographical radius.

Musical leadership at the BAS service is provided by the Volunteer Choir on alternate Sundays. Under the direction of Jurgen Petrenko, this ensemble leads in sung liturgy and anthems. Whether at the 9:00 am or 11:00 am service, congregational hymn singing is strong and meaningful. Parishioners join with clergy, choirs, and organ in praise, thanksgiving, and prayer. Organ preludes and postludes by Jurgen Petrenko are integral to our worship. The renowned acoustical properties of the church enhance these expressions.

**O sing merrily unto
God our strength**
Psalm 81



Emily Petrenko leads the Children and Youth Choir as an intentional link to the community. The choir sings once a month and on special occasions throughout the year. Emily provides these young singers with important vocal and musical training and choristers from outside the Parish are warmly welcomed. This presents an excellent opportunity for families to learn about St. John's. It is our way of introducing children to the joy and discipline of choral music as an act of worship.

In biblical/theological study groups, we deepen our faith and learn more of God's word for us and for the world. Our annual retreat in October brings in an outside leader. Some recent themes were Art as an Aid to Prayer, the poetry of George Herbert, Praying the Psalms, and the Confessions of St. Augustine.

Children regularly and enthusiastically participate in Sunday School; its curriculum follows *Godly Play*. Attendance ebbs and flows as our demographic changes.

Once a month, our Healing Ministry team leads a service of healing and reconciliation which is open to members and non-members of our parish community.

Also, monthly, Holy Communion is celebrated with residents at Wellington Terrace Long Term Care Home and Heritage River Retirement Residence.

We are a serving community

The incarnation is the ultimate reason why service of God cannot be divorced from the service of man.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

As a community comprising many who are in that "giving back" stage of life, St. John's inspires a wide variety of volunteer acts of service.

Close to home, on a weekly basis, a team of parishioners, led by a priest assistant, brings the good news of Christ to the residents at Portage, an alternative addiction treatment centre for youth. Some of these young people become active participants in services as servers, acolytes, Sunday School assistants, readers, and intercessors. During their time at St. John's, many have met Christ and several have been baptized. Some stories are joyful and triumphant; some are tragic and break our hearts. The youth of Portage are a blessing to our community. Our interaction with these young people is the pre-eminent service of St. John's.

A sense of belonging is nurtured by service in many forms. These include readers, sidespersons, flower arrangers, gardeners, hosts of the coffee hour, and visitors to those isolated for social or health reasons. Other unselfish acts of love frequently go unnoticed. A loyal group is the Quilters and Knitters which meets weekly, offering its skills to raise money for our church. The monthly Men's Group Dinner and Women's Group Dinner help us enjoy and strengthen fellowship. Both raise funds, contributing to specific needs that arise. Guests are welcomed from the wider community to share insights and expertise about social conditions, the environment, arts, and history. Unique events, such as the Shrove Tuesday and Patronal Festival meals, give further opportunity for social connection.

St. John's is a regular contributor to the Centre Wellington Foodbank and faithfully fulfills its assignment at Christmas.

Beyond our local geography, St. John's is a strong supporter of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund. One of the fundraising events is the annual *Harvest Tea*, jointly organized with St. James Church, Fergus. Kenyan twins, Angeline and Leah are graduating this year with university degrees, their tuition paid by St. John's. Widening our circle further, donations are made to ACTS (Africa Community Technical Services), a development program in Uganda. Most recently, St. John's has assisted financially and/or with time and skills the Centre Wellington Refugee Network with the aim of welcoming Syrian refugees.



Historic links with the Elora Festival and Singers (EFS) and St. John's-Kilmarnock School (SJK) continue to be an outreach to "Friends of St. John's" and to enhance our Parish life. Many current parishioners first set foot in our building at an EFS concert, or as a student or graduate of SJK. The future of our longstanding relationship with SJK is open for discussion.

St. John's has a longstanding relationship with Christ Church, Drayton. Services at the chapel are offered by the Rev. Canon Robert Hulse, Rector Emeritus.

We are a diverse community

While we are somewhat homogeneous, mainly of European heritage, we represent most socio-economic strata and a diversity of theological persuasion, sexual orientation, and artistic preferences. Normal tensions abound, as with any real community. Many parishioners come from different denominational backgrounds, united in a search for the transcendent. We do not politicize our differences, but rather believe that in this diversity, God's grace is revealed. Our differences, across so many dimensions, enrich our life as one community, one congregation, one parish.

Where we live, worship and serve

We live in a beautiful region

Our church building of St. John's is located in beautiful Elora, a charming, bustling village set beside the Grand River in the limestone-studded farming area northwest of Toronto and home to the Elora Festival in July each year. The village contains heritage and traditional homes and a growing population in new developments. Projected to grow, Elora is attracting people both of retirement age and those who work from home or commute. We are within easy commuting of three universities, the University of Guelph, Wilfrid Laurier University, and the University of Waterloo, along with three campuses of Conestoga College, all less than an hour's drive.



We are a community from far and wide

In 1999, the townships of West Garafraxa, Nichol, Pilkington and a small part of Eramosa, the village of Elora, the town of Fergus and the settlement areas of Salem, Inverhaugh and Belwood came together as the Township of Centre Wellington. Today, the population of 33,180 has already grown from 2011 (26,693) and is expected to reach 38,390 by 2026. Employment and income levels are above national averages. St. John's lies in the heart of a thriving and growing region comprising both urban and rural centres. The average house price in the Township of Centre Wellington is approximately \$475,000-\$500,000.

While the parish roster approaches 550, weekly attendance at the three Sunday services is a third of that and averages 160 with peaks (300-400) at Easter, Christmas and other high days and holidays. The Sunday School averages 25 children per week, but our demographic is skewed well beyond the young family stage. However, our recent Survey reveals that nearly half of the congregation has come within the past 15 years and new members often come to us in the pre-retirement and early post-retirement life stages. Our "youth" tend to be in their 40s and 50s, rather than teens! The community is supported financially by a group (200-250) of regular donors.

The recent Survey also suggests that about half of our parishioners come from outside Elora. Nearly sixty percent of respondents told us that they attend almost every Sunday, of which the vast majority comes for the 11:00am BCP service.

Over the past 40 years, the boundaries of our "parish" have grown geographically now including such urban areas as Milton, Oakville, and Kitchener-Waterloo. Today, we have become a community from many walks of

life, united in a shared passion to worship and serve together, and to invite others to join us on this walk.

We are a community with roots...that go back more than 150 years

On September 24, 1848, the first Church was consecrated by Bishop Strachan of Toronto and named "The Church of St. John the Evangelist". This building was located away from the village itself, on Country Road 7, and was used until the present church at Smith and Henderson Streets was opened in October, 1875.



The first permanent rector was the Reverend John A. Smithurst who served from 1852 until 1857. His relationship with his cousin, Florence Nightingale, has provided an interesting story and, along with her gift of a silver chalice to St. John's, has a prominent place in our church history. An annual community service award has been inspired by her work. From 1857 until 2016 there have been 20 rectors, but only two in the last fifty years. Under the leadership of Rev. Canon Robert Hulse and recently retired Rector, Rev. Canon Dr. Patrick Patterson, St. John's has flourished and become well known for its traditional Anglican worship based on the BCP and sung liturgy. We have a heritage building, but our central form of worship draws from centuries of rich, biblically-grounded practice by God's people. It is our past and we believe it is our future.

We have a beautiful, historic church building

The Parish of St. John the Evangelist owns two abutting properties in the centre of Elora: on one, the Church with municipal address (and our mailing address) 36 Henderson Street; and on the other, the Parish Centre at 168 Geddes Street, Elora's main street. The core structure at each location has been designated as a heritage building by the Township of Centre Wellington. Over the years, other properties bequeathed or owned by St. John's, including the rectory, have been sold. In 2008, the rectory was sold, recognizing that many rectors have families and working spouses and often wish to have equity in their own homes.

The Church building, in the Victorian Gothic Revival style and with wonderful acoustics, was designed by Henry Langley and opened in 1875, with the bell tower added about 1885. Many enhancements to the original building have been made over the years. The basement was dug out by the men of the parish over a two-year span in the 1940s and two small additions were completed in the 1950s: a west entrance allowing access to the nave and basement, and a vestry at the northeast corner with access to the chancel and basement. A

Casavant-rebuilt organ (two-manual, 23 stops, 24 ranks, 1,473 pipes) was installed in 1968 and has had several upgrades since, including the addition of a Phoenix digital division. The interior of the church was decorated by Gordon Couling, a local artist and professor who specialized in church decorations (painting, woodwork, stained-glass windows).

The rich colours and character of stained-glass windows, murals, seasonal banners, exquisitely created by a current parishioner, and a growing collection of classically designed and beautifully executed icons from the tradition of our Orthodox church family, primarily the art of another current parishioner, are a blessed augment to our worship. All add visual richness and allow us to find new and precious insights into the work of God.

Changes to the configuration of the pews mean the nave seating capacity is now about 200. Basement and nave and chancel upgrades, a new weather vane and bell tower roof, a metal main roof, improved accessibility, repair and restoration of stained glass windows, and masonry repair have been undertaken over the last 30 years, and as with any older building, are ongoing. A columbarium was established along the north side in 1992.

A project to achieve complete barrier-free accessibility lies ahead and will be an important part of serving our particular demographic. This will be a major and expensive undertaking and will be part of our future decision-making.



The original part of the Parish Centre, a 1 ½-storey, frame workingman's cottage, was built in the early 1860s. In the early 1950s, an addition was added which doubled its size. After purchasing the house in 1991, the parish operated it as a rental home before undertaking the conversion of the home to parish use in 2015 with an 835-square-foot addition and the renovation and modernization of the existing building, all under the watchful eye of the local

heritage committee. This fully accessible building now contains offices and a reception area in the original main floor area, and in the addition both a spacious foyer and meeting room on the main floor, and new mechanical systems and a music library on the basement level. The music stored in this library, jointly owned by the Elora Festival and the Church, is protected through air conditioning and heating, dehumidification, a sump pump, and an ECHO Pressure Control Ventilation System to remove possible dampness from behind outside walls and beneath floors.

The loving hands of many volunteers attend to the care of flower beds, shrubs and bushes, decorations and art in various materials, and many of the building repairs. Taken together, our Church properties facilitate worship, and have a beautiful and prominent physical presence in the village of Elora.

2. How we get things done

We are a community of volunteers...with some paid help

Much of the work of sustaining the “operations” of the community is done by more formally appointed or elected volunteers such as:

- Church Wardens: People's Warden, Rector's Warden
- Deputy Wardens (2)
- Lay Delegates to Synod (3) and Alternates (2)
- Treasurer
- Chair of the Property and Building Committee
- Chair of the Investment Committee
- Parish Council (16)
- Parish Secretary
- Envelope Secretary
- Sunday School leaders



The remunerated staff includes our Rector along with a team that serves the unique stewardship of choral worship. Included in this team are:

- Organist and Choirmaster - Noel Edison (who also leads the Elora Festival and Singers and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir)
- Titular Organist - Jurgen Petrenko (who also directs the Toronto Classical Singers)
- Director, Volunteer Choir
- Director, Children and Youth Choir - Emily Petrenko (who also directs the Mississauga Children's Choir)
- Parish Choir members
- Music Librarian
- Custodian (part-time)

This community is served by a wide array of volunteers who simply get done what needs to be done, often without notice or fanfare, and include: Altar Guild, Sidespersons, Chalice Bearers, Crucifers, Acolytes (Portage), Counters, Coffee Hour Hosts, Flower Arrangers, Building and Property Committee, St. John's Investment Committee, the PWRDF group, and creators of a variety of communications.

We are a blessed community



We are truly blessed at St. John's, Elora, with a financial position that is strong, in no small part because of the faithfulness of stewards that have gone before and left bequests. But we are not simply a "local" parish, and our financial stability is in no small measure enabled through the wide geographic reach of our particular character and practices. Some have said we are a "city church" that lives in a "small village" – we think of ourselves as a community first which happens to live across a wide region.

We are solvent, and seek to be prudent with God's resources. We have no debt outstanding and are current with respect to the DMM Assessment from the Diocese. We are well funded in the long term with over \$3 million in endowments under investment. We are also well funded in the short term through offerings of about \$500,000 annually, for operating expenses and outreach. Our endowment income (\$75,000) is essential to avert an operating deficit. A significant portion of the general endowment fund, \$375,000, is earmarked for long-term capital projects. A priority in the near future is to make the church building more physically accessible.

St. John's is a consistent advocate of designated causes including ACTS Uganda, PWRDF, a Kenya Scholarship fund, and the Centre Wellington Refugee Support Group. In PWRDF alone, St. John's has shown particularly strong support over several years.

**All that he is and all that he has,
he gives;
All that we are, and all that we
have, he asks.**

Saint Augustine

The end of 2016 brings to a close the three-year funding program for the construction of our Parish Centre. This project cost over \$430,000, funded 83% through parishioners' donations and the remainder through investments. This is over and above the parishioners' funding of general church operations.

3. What lies ahead

As we reflect on the abundant blessings bestowed upon us at St. John's, we ask how they can be used to advance the reign of Christ in our lives, in our communities, in the world.

Equipping us to love God more dearly and love our neighbour more truly

It is vital that we continue growing in our sacred acts of worship and service. As stewards of beautiful and blessed forms of worship, nurtured by generations of believers, we have provided spiritual nourishment and welcomed many. We need the renewal and hope offered when we open our hearts and minds to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In faith we seek to know God more deeply through regular study. In prayer we seek to become better equipped for living as disciples in a world where such life is counter-cultural. In all this, we need to be constantly reminded not to seek our own comfort and gratification.

Sharing the Riches and the Beauty of our Worship



We wonder how we can more intentionally reach out to the many for whom St. John's might become a haven in a world run amok. In this aim, we must overcome at least two challenges: (1) we are a light too often hidden under a basket; and (2) we do not always offer the warmth of welcome that draws people in. We clearly need to improve our communication through our website and social media. We need to "make room" for visitors and newcomers. We need to develop plans for bringing St. John's to the attention of residents in Centre Wellington and well beyond and to those who might be touched by the unique blessing of encountering the transcendent as we join together in worship that draws deeply from our roots as Anglicans.

We need to be readied for growth in membership and to be changed by such growth.

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.
Jer. 29:11

Our Sacred Act of Service

To serve those in need was given high priority in our Parish Survey. It is currently practised in our manifold ministries reviewed earlier and in particular in our ministry to the youth at Portage. Parishioners of St. John's have responded most generously and consistently to calls for help in many parts of the world. We have accompanied individuals and communities in their search for peace, just relations, and healthy living.

We are wondering how to apply our experiences and talents to new situations, groups, and consciousness. Should we expand our ministry to youth, based on our work with children in Sunday School, with youth at Portage, and those in the Children and Youth Choir? Should we link intentionally to families and adults in mid-life at the height of their working years and as they enter later middle-life? Should we reach out to those who are socially isolated? Many might look at our "aging" demographic and see it as a problem. Yet, we are a community of sages with an accumulation of life experiences that we can and already do offer to others.

This is the hope that inspires Christians: We know that every effort to better society, especially where injustice and sin are ingrained, is an effort that God blesses, that God wants, that God demands of us.

Archbishop Oscar Romero

We may need to learn more about our own roles and that of our church and country in a world that is governed by power and not stewardship. We need to hear and learn to speak the voices of hope, of healing, peace, and just relationships, of fair sharing and preserving God's sacred creation.

In so many other spheres in our culture today, to become a "senior" is to become redundant. At St. John's we are demonstrating quite the opposite, and seek to steward the gifts that "elders" can offer to both church and community. The demographic phenomenon of an aging population is well known and is a key opportunity for us to demonstrate and practise that "aging" truly is for "saging", and that the final trimester of life is a vibrant and essential opportunity for contribution and service.

In all this we need to be open to the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We seek a Rector who will walk with us on that journey, stimulate fresh insights, and make us ready for the acts of service that the Lord has already prepared for us.

4. The Rector we seek

We seek a rector - priest, leader, and pastor - who will join with us

We look for a person to join with us, to come alongside. As we have reflected and talked together as a community and sought the Lord's wisdom, we find that the following characteristics continue to emerge in our discernment: a lover and student of God's Word, a guide, a pastor with a compassionate heart.

A Lover of God's Word

We seek a person who will reveal the Word of God in all its depth and breadth. From a sound theological basis and reflecting a deep personal faith, the Rector will equip us for service. Whether it is from the pulpit or in study groups, the Rector will help us understand the scriptures and deepen our knowledge of and faith in Christ.



The Rector will have strong liturgical skills. Some of us love the language and form of the Book of Alternative Services; many are deeply rooted in the language and liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer. Our future Rector will love and celebrate both forms while helping us always to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We will welcome someone with a creative mind, grounded in God's Word, for today's world.

A Guide

For good or ill – and it is probably some of both – St. John's is full of smart, thoughtful, opinionated, busy, and active people. As we have sought through our Survey and Workshop to discern our common ground, we have found that there is a lot of it and that there are many opportunities for growth. We seek a leader who will join with us to discover further direction in our ministry, and show us by example how we might follow Christ more deeply.

We already administer well; we need to grow in welcoming strangers. We strive for excellence in worship; we need to be encouraged to let the Word dwell richly in each of us. We can raise money when required; we need to keep opening the boundaries of our community. We are a blessed but far from perfect community; we seek a leader who will come alongside us and help us grow in grace and truth.

We need to be challenged to move beyond our comfort zone and let ourselves be re-oriented towards ways and areas of witness that may well lead us into uncharted waters.

A Caring Pastor

We seek a Rector who commits to God all the tasks, the needs, the challenges, and joys of St. John's. We look for someone who will help us grow in prayer as a gift of God's grace and a response to God's invitation.

Beneath the lovely building, wondrous music, candlelight, and the varied acts of sacrifice and service, is a very real community of people. We need a pastor who can help us through our many stages of life, celebrating our joys and grieving our losses. We seek someone who will walk closely with us, and be our pastor: more intercessor than officiate, more companion than authority figure, more servant than master.

Conclusion

It is in faith – the confidence in things not yet seen – that we move forward in this process of discernment. We know that the Lord, in his perfect ways, has already chosen a priest, leader, and pastor to come among us. We wait expectantly to welcome that person. It is in the Lord's calling we trust. "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose." (Rom 8:28)



For additional information, please read our most recent Vestry Report at http://www.stjohnselora.ca/index.cfm?page=vestry_main, and listen to music sung by our Parish Choir: <http://www.stjohnselora.ca/index.cfm?page=music>