
St. Mark's United Church

Love. Grow. Serve

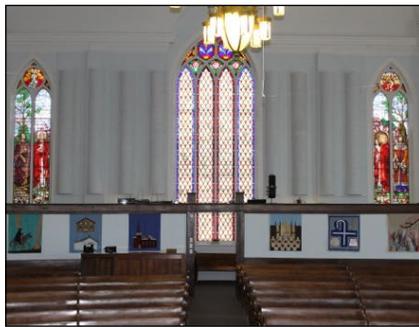
Living Faith Profile, 2021



St. Mark's United Church

*Through our faith in Jesus Christ we have understanding.
- St. Anselm*

From our Methodist roots to present day we work to serve God by caring, sharing, serving and loving. Our church is liberal in theology and worship but our congregation includes both those who relate to traditional and those who relate to modern views. We all come to God in our own way and collectively believe that volunteerism is an essential part of our commitment.



Living Faith Story

For almost 200 years, through faith and grace, St. Mark's has created a faith community that promotes inclusivity and love.

Vision Statement

Our vision is that St. Mark's will be a worshipping, welcoming church family living the love of Jesus Christ with faith, courage and commitment in this congregation, in this community and beyond.

Mission Statement

To work towards our vision, united in Christ, the mission of St. Mark's is to continue to serve God by caring for, and sharing with, those in need in body, mind and spirit through our worship, witness, service and love.

Welcome to St. Mark's!

Joy can be real only if people look upon their life as a service.
- Leo Tolstoy

St. Mark's is a community of people gathering to worship God, to attempt good works in God's name, and to enjoy being together in faith. Like any community, we're made up of people with different strengths and weaknesses, beliefs and hopes.

Some of us are confident in our faith; many of us are still searching and questioning and hoping for guidance.

St. Mark's is home to many talented, enthusiastic singers and musicians for whom making music together is an integral part of the church experience. It's also home to those who prefer to listen.

Outreach is one of the things we do best together. Our projects, such as providing food and Christmas Hampers for those in need, draw on the strengths of our many committed volunteers. Many of our outreach projects involve supporting other established organizations within the community, such as the food bank at another local church.

As a congregation, we are less culturally diverse than our community. This is a way in which we need to grow.

More of us are over 60 than under. That being said, we have a vibrant, active volunteer base that reaches across all ages.

We care for each other. When Covid kept us from meeting in person, we used the phone and the Internet to keep in touch, even before our online ministry had fully developed. We have checked on each other in bad times, celebrated in good, and seen each other's children grow up.

The nature of what a church is and means in today's world is shifting. We don't know yet what that means for us, and we could use some guidance navigating the changes.

We are still here, we are willing, and we have hope for the future.



Our Team

Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value.
- Albert Einstein

St. Mark's has an active group of leaders who share their gifts with our church. We operate with a full Council format which includes leadership of the various Ministries including Trustees. Council meets 10 times per year to celebrate successes, discuss challenges, coordinate future activities and provide direction.

We have an active Ministry & Personnel Ministry with an appointed liaison for each member of staff for support and mentorship.



Our paid full-time staff includes our Minister, Administrator and Caretaker. We also have two part-time staff: our Children's Program Leader and our Youth Leader. A contracted individual leads our Chancel Choir as Organist/Choir Director. For years, we were fortunate in having a wonderful

part-time Parish Nurse. Since her retirement, the position has been vacant as we await the calling of our new Minister and seek to discern the needs and resources of our community of faith.

A church needs volunteerism and leadership at many levels, and St. Mark's is generally strong in this area. It is sometimes a challenge to find those willing to commit their time and energy to the more continuous efforts like Ministry leadership, Council leadership, and longer-term planning, but we have no problem finding able volunteers for short-term activities. All leadership positions are presently filled.

You may want to know:

We encourage our Minister's interest in professional development and continued education by budgeting for study breaks. The choice on how to allocate their time and funds is left up to the Minister. We hope that any requests or concerns will be brought up during open discussion with their Ministry and Personnel representative.

Response to Covid and Current Situation

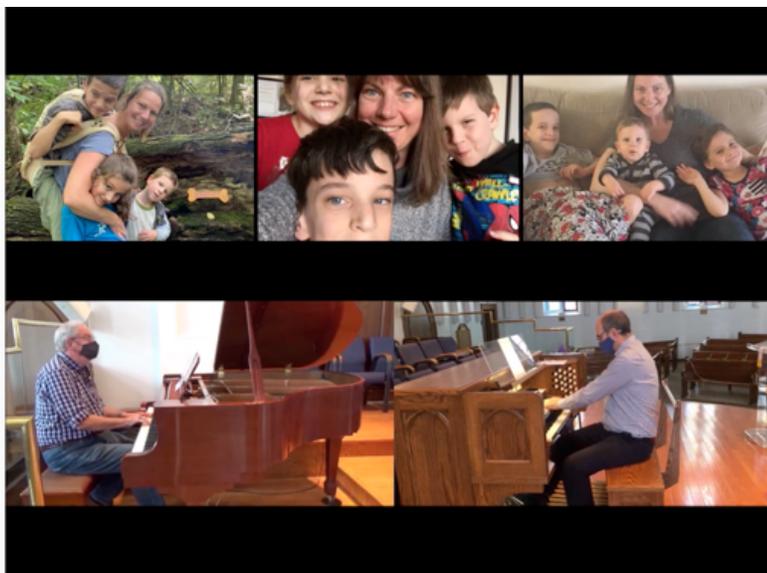
In difficult times carry something beautiful in your heart.
- Blaise Pascal

St. Mark's was in an unusual situation when the first wave of Covid-19 hit the province. Only two weeks before, we had said goodbye to our minister of 10 years. The sanctuary closed to in-person worship March 15th, 2020, which meant that our temporary minister barely had time to meet anyone in person before everything moved online.

They, and everyone else, rose to the challenge admirably. We never missed a Sunday; the first week of lockdown, we responded with daily messages of hope sent out to the congregation and the earliest version of what would become our online services. We were the first congregation in East Central Ontario Region with an approved Covid 19 Operations plan. We subsequently formed a Covid advisory team which meets every two weeks or as there is a change in protocol.

We have been able to maintain certain Outreach activities including our Christmas Hamper Program and St. Mark's Food to Go. A regular phone-calling program was instituted, a weekly newsletter allowed us to share news and stay connected, and some fundraising activities were successfully converted to an online format.

With regards to online Worship, we started with weekly videos incorporating a welcome, a Message, and a prayer from our Minister. With the assistance of our Minister and some of our more technically adept members, we eventually evolved to an online-friendly version of our full Sunday service. Our congregation has become proficient at recording themselves from home, and our volunteers combine that footage with music from our wonderful Organist/Choir Director. Our online (you Tube) services have been well received by our regular faith community and the broader community.



Worship

Prayer does not change God but it changes him who prays.

- Soren Kierkegaard

Worship takes many forms at St. Mark's.

Pre-Covid services typically followed a traditional style with prayers, readings, reflections and music thoughtfully integrated into a meaningful time of worship. The service was generally set out in three parts:

- Call to Worship, which includes the lighting of the Christ candle, call to worship, opening hymn, prayers, and a musical selection from one of the choirs
- Listening to God's Word, which includes children's time, the Lord's Prayer, a Hymn, scripture readings, and the Minister's reflection
- Responding to God's Word, through hymns, the prayers of the people, collection and blessing of the offering, commissioning and Benediction.

It was usually led by the Minister but congregants often participated and occasionally the children and or teens led. Sometimes we have enjoyed hearing from guest speakers.

We have two choirs: the Chancel Choir and the less formal Mixed Blessings Choir. Most weeks, one of the choirs will be part of the service. For many of us music is the glue that unites us. The Choir leaders often compose or arrange their own music for choir, organ and/or piano.

In creating the online experience made necessary by Covid, we adopted a revised structure. One challenge we are facing is discerning what our return to in-person worship will look like. We do not want to desert our online members but do look forward to being together again in person. We are still exploring possibilities.

Accessibility

Our goal when it comes to Worship is to be inclusive and open, providing a place of comfort and hope. Our sanctuary is wheelchair-accessible; an elevator leads to the second floor. For in-person worship, we use technology such as projection screens, theatre lighting and audio support, and listening devices to enhance our services and to help with accessibility. Sermons are made available via audio (and now video) recording to those participating from home. For more about our Audio Ministry, please see the 2020 Annual Report.

Faith Formation and Christian Education

Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.
- Aristotle

We have two exceptional part-time staff Children and Youth Program leaders, supported by volunteers. For in-person worship, Sunday School attendance varies from 15-24 children, aged from JK to Grade 6. The Sunday School and Youth Group occasionally lead our Sunday Services with skits and songs.

St. Mark's has also run a well-attended Vacation Bible Camp every summer. Through their various activities the young learn about the love of Jesus Christ and how his teachings influence behaviour.



A Minister-led "Let's Talk" group meets regularly online to discuss wide-reaching questions. A Tuesday-morning coffee group and various other online activities (such as the "Knitwits" knitting group) keep us together in faith. In the past, our adult members have enjoyed discussion groups and Bible study opportunities.

We recognize the need to cover the whole demographic of our community. We could become more inclusive and improve our understanding of other Faiths within our community. We strive to interpret our faith by a living example. Sharing our faith both within the church and outside in the broader community is always a challenge.

Pastoral Care and Health & Wellness

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, as long as ever you can.

- John Wesley

We are proud of our Pastoral Care Programs and our Health & Wellness Programs. They are intended to complement our commitment to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Our congregation has come up with ever-expanding ways to bring solace to those who need it. Some of our efforts involve the following:

- Visitations and Caring
- Communion Service and Luncheon for members unable to attend; drivers and care givers provided
- Audio Call-in Worship Ministry
- Soup Kindness Project
- Prayer Chain
- Prayer Shawl Ministry
- Therapeutic Touch Group
- Christian Meditation Group
- Christmas Hamper Project
- St. Mark's Food To Go
- Big Give Project
- Christmas Carolling

The Outreach (next page), Pastoral Care, and Health & Wellness Ministries each have their own areas of engagement, but they all work together to ensure that St. Mark's members are caring for each other, for the community around us, and for the wider world.

Please see our Annual Congregation report for a more complete listing and details.



Note: Due to Covid, some Pastoral Care and Health & Wellness practices have been put on hold. We look forward to resuming them when possible.

Outreach and Social Justice

*Be the change you wish to see in the world.
- Mahatma Gandhi*

St. Mark's supports many outreach efforts, focussing on those who have been marginalized.

These outreach needs are discovered through attendance at community activities, conversations with our Minister or Administrator, and Social Services. We are strong supporters of The United Church Mission and Service. The year 2020 was an exception to our usual funding pattern.

Sometimes, our way of helping has been to support existing efforts of other churches and organizations through our Outreach and Health & Wellness Ministries. These partnerships have worked well. Examples include:

- Kawartha Mission
- Destiny Manor
- World Vision
- Soles for Souls
- FOOTPRINTS 4 Autism
- Parkinson's Support Group



St. Mark's also collects donations for the local food bank hosted by St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. In addition, we have a group who weave sleeping mats which are sent to developing countries or to those suffering from a natural disaster.

We also have an Emergency Shelter Fund to provide assistance to those in immediate need by offering food, grocery cards, bus or transit tokens, and other necessary items.

Sharing and Caring Together

The best way to cheer yourself up is to cheer somebody else up.
- Mark Twain

The many programs run through St. Mark's offer opportunities to build a deeper relationship with God through reflection and shared interests with Christian joy.

Throughout the year there are many ways for people to get involved—everything from therapeutic touch and meditation to outreach programs, choirs and study or inquiry groups. Small groups are important at St Mark's, whether they are long-term groups for discussion and exploration, or more project-oriented groups formed with a particular end in mind.

Many members of the St. Mark's congregation and the community beyond are involved in the theatrical group, St. Mark's Players. For many years now, they have organized a free-will-offering of a major production at the start of each Christmas season which acts as a form of outreach and brings us together in celebration.



The St. Mark's United Church Women group is a major strength of our church. These 50-60 women meet in worship and investigate a large variety of interests. They have organized auctions, fashion shows, quilt shows, no-bake bake sales, a fall merchant market and "No Room in the Inn," a pre-Christmas display of over 100 nativity scenes. Many of them are also active in other areas of church life.

The men's group enjoys delivering a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, treating the congregation on Mothering Sunday, providing refreshment for their after-church Sunday, and spending time together through golf and other in-season activities.

With all of these opportunities for involvement, we try to be aware of the possibility of volunteer burnout. We have instituted time limits on some leadership roles to help avoid this.

You may want to know:

It's our hope to support and encourage our Minister in a similar fashion. We hope that our Minister will want to become involved in the life of the congregation, while understanding that maintaining a healthy life-work balance is essential.

Community Involvement

You are never too small to make a difference.
- Greta Thunberg

St. Mark's members tend to be active within our community in both Church-related and secular activities. Many of our members and adherents are actively involved in other community organizations. We learn through them and the Word and work of St. Mark's are conveyed outward.

- For many years now, we have been the home base of a Scouting unit and enjoyed their participation in our Scouting Sunday services
- We took a role in the previous Presbytery structure and supported our minister in her recent role as Presbytery chair
- We currently have two Regional reps and two Cluster reps; we believe in working with and learning from other churches to grow stronger
- In the recent GC 43, three of our members attended and were on the logistics committee
- For our Christmas Hamper program we have partnered with Whitby Rotary; they have subsidized the program and in past years provided physical assistance. The program is also subsidized by Algoma Orchards and other community members
- The FOOTPRINTS 4 Autism group was started by members of Dunbarton Fairport UC and now has an active presence in St. Mark's. The current Chairperson and two board members are members of St. Mark's
- In rotation with other Durham Regions locations, we host the World Day of Prayer Service.

For some time now, local churches have been teaming together to make a bigger impact as we have with our support of the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Food Bank and the Dunbarton Fairport FOOTPRINTS 4 Autism. We recognize we accomplish more in the area by teaming with local churches and perhaps agencies. We will be even better working together.

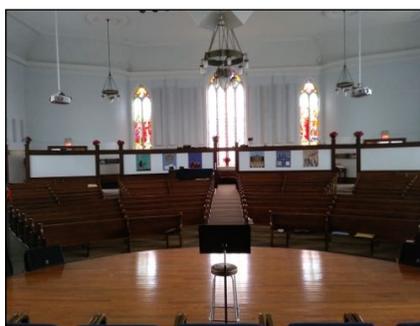
Our Building

*He who does not have the Church as his mother, does not have God as his father.
- St. Augustine of Hippo*



Our facilities support our many worship, service, social and community programs. Additionally, outside groups make good use of these facilities.

We worship in person from our large, fully accessible, Methodist-style Sanctuary.



In addition to the Sanctuary our Church Upper Hall is the home of three offices, two meeting rooms, a full commercial kitchen, a large open room, choir rooms, storage and two washrooms (one accessible).





The Lower floor has many uses including Church school areas, washrooms and a play area.

We also own our original Church

Manse, which is currently leased to Durham Montessori School and Day Care.

Our buildings are in good physical shape and are well maintained with an annual schedule.

For more detailed information please see our 2020 Annual Report.

Caring for our Environment

We have taken steps toward updating our “elderly” building. Many lights have been changed to LED and we are waiting for the current Covid controls to be lifted so that Elixicon (Whitby Hydro) can give us an electrical assessment and pay for up to \$2000 of energy-saving retrofits. We have registered with Faithful Footprints for support in other energy-saving initiatives.

Finances

*I have found that among its other benefits, giving regulates the soul of the giver.
- Maya Angelou*

The St Mark’s Faith Community has been very supportive over the years and especially during the Covid Pandemic. With the help of Canada Emergency Funding we have been able to maintain our total staff complement during this period. While many of our regular fundraising initiatives have been curtailed, some pivoted to an online version. In all we have been able to realize a positive financial position in 2020, due to the Government’s assistance program. We also hold investments for In Memoriam funds and from the past sale of a newer Church Manse (not the original one shown above). Our 2021 Budget projects a break-even for the year.

Please refer to the 2020 Annual Report for more details.

The Future of St. Mark's

The true church can never fail. For it is based upon a rock.
- T.S. Eliot

As with most churches, organizations and companies, our post-Covid vision is uncertain but evolving. Our online virtual services, including the Christmas Choral service, have been well received. Our YouTube editions have frequently had more followers than we had in our sanctuary for similar times. Our virtual Summer Bible Camp was a big success.

These services are dependent upon a few talented busy volunteers. We have plans to continue online ministry into the end of summer of 2021 and are developing a strategy going forth from there. Going forward, we believe an online presence will be an important component; a small group is working on determining what our online services might look like once we are also able to meet in person.

We are discerning our future and will need help in this area. We continue to consult with local churches and community organizations, to find ways to best serve our faith community and to serve wider needs.

We have faith in our future but need God—and our new Minister—to help guide us.

You may want to know:

We are hoping to find someone who is passionate about Worship, someone who can help us understand how to live better in today's world. Someone who will support us in discerning and enacting the changes we need to make as a congregation in order to grow, while helping us face the challenges that come with that.

Our ideal Minister will want to make connections with the Congregation and will help us continue to make connections with each other. At St. Mark's, you will find supportive helpers ready to work with you, be it for Pastoral Care, Christian Education, or any of the many circles of caring and responsibility that make up a church.

We look forward to welcoming you.



Visit us Online

Wherever there is a human being there is an opportunity for kindness.
- Seneca

To learn more about St. Mark's, please visit our:

- [Website](#), containing many more resources
- [YouTube Channel](#) including our online Sunday services
- [Welcome Video](#) featuring some of the St. Mark's Congregation
- [2020 Annual Report](#)
- [2021 Budget](#)
- [Introduction to Whitby](#), to welcome you to our community