



Consultation Report Prepared for
Saint Laurence Anglican Church, Coquitlam, BC

By Jan Taylor

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BACKGROUND

In February 2025 the Saint Laurence Anglican Church (SLC) Parish Vestry Meeting made a commitment to undertake a parish-wide consultation that will shape our shared future with clarity, creativity, and care.

In May 2025 SLC Parish Council approved a consultation process to honour that commitment. The consultation took place during May and June of 2025. SLC had been through a period of transition with a major renovation; the loss of a number of long-term, cherished members of the congregation; the addition of a number of newer members, and the selection and induction of a new priest. The 2024 Parish Profile provided an accurate portrayal of the parish when it was written. The time now seemed right to engage parishioners in conversations to guide the *future* focus, direction and priorities of the parish. This report describes that process and its findings.

Purpose

The purpose of the consultation (entitled **Listening Forward**) was to create space for thoughtful, informal conversations with members of the church community – particularly those whose voices aren't always heard. The consultation was designed to listen for what parishioners believe matters most and gives life to the Church. It provides guidance about future priorities that will deepen relationships; surface wisdom, and make room for the Spirit to speak to members of the Church community, individually and collectively.

Guiding Principles

The following principles guided the work of the consultation:

- Everyone is treated with respect and kindness
- Participation is always by invitation, never expectation
- Communication is clear about purpose and potential use of the consultation findings
- Participants are asked questions they can genuinely answer
- Participants are offered multiple ways to participate
- Contributions are anonymous
- Consultation findings are shared with the community

METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Method

In order to encourage as much participation as possible, members were invited to participate in the following ways:

- Small group discussions based on existing SLC groups (outlined below)
- Individual in-person conversations
- Individual telephone conversations
- E-mail exchanges
- On-line survey
- Post cards

The input was consolidated, and compiled in this report, which is submitted to the Rector and Council, prior to distribution to the SLC community as a whole.

Small group discussions were structured around current ministry and leadership groups, including:

- Choir – 11 participants
- Phoenix Friends – 10 participants
- Young Adult Group – 5 participants
- Issues and Action Committee – 7 participants
- Children's Church – 6 participants
- Wednesday Morning Worship Group – 4 participants
- Pastoral Care Team – 6 participants
- IgnYte – 4 participants
- Children's Church Families – 5 participants

In total, 58 people participated in small group discussions. (Where an individual participated in more than 1 discussion group, they were counted only once.)

In addition, 5 people participated in individual in-person conversations; 3 people participated in telephone conversations, and 1 person submitted input via e-mail. Fifteen people completed the on-line survey and 4 members submitted post card responses.

In total, then, 86 members of the SLC community provided input to the consultation using one or more of the methods provided.

Demographics

Participants range in age from 4 years old to almost 90 years old.

Where participant gender was identified, slightly more females than males participated.

Many participants identified themselves as life-long Anglicans with decades of involvement at SLC. Others joined the community much more recently. The length of time parishioners have been actively involved in SLC varies greatly and consultation responses reflect this diversity.

A targeted outreach was undertaken to attract newer members to participate in the consultation.

One limitation of the methodology was the inability to connect with parishioners for whom English is not their first language. The perspectives of those participants are, therefore, sadly missing from this report.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS AND INTERPRETATION

The consultation was limited to 3 questions:

1. What brought you to Saint Laurence Church?
2. What keeps you coming back?
3. What would you like us to focus on next?

Participants were invited to respond to these questions within a relatively informal approach, moving through the questions recognizing that the answers sometimes overlap and interweave. In small group discussions, time was made available for each participant to answer the questions.

Questions were designed to focus on the connection between what SLC members currently value and what they want to see moving forward.

The consultation was not intended as an **evaluation** of past or current SLC priorities or practices. Nevertheless, where evaluative input was provided, this report attempts to incorporate it as positively, and constructively as possible

In addition, it is important to note, that some input was primarily about administrative/logistical issues. These responses, while valuable, do not capture the information that the Listening Forward consultation sought to discover. Accordingly, these concerns are not part of this report. Instead, they have been communicated to the Rector via a briefing note. Those concerns include issues such as acoustics in the Sanctuary; use of name tags; use of the members' portal; service bulletins, and Sanctuary configuration.

FINDINGS

Question #1: What brought you to Saint Laurence?

Participants described coming to Saint Laurence for the first time for a variety of reasons, including:

- lived nearby
- St. Catherine's merged with SLC
- introduced to Saint Laurence by family or friends
- connected through one of our community partnerships
- children's programming
- need for support during personal crisis
- opportunity to be in the choir
- reputation for progressive, inclusive theology and practice

Question #2: What keeps you coming back?

Whatever reason initially brought participants to Saint Laurence, their reasons for coming back provide valuable insights into their attachment to the SLC community and their commitment to continuing involvement. These reasons include:

- contemporary, inclusive worship and liturgy
- faith centred, spiritually based liturgy
- progressive attitudes and openness to exploration and growth

- caring and kind people
- music (there was virtually unanimous reference to the quality of the music at SLC) and the vital role it plays in creating connections amongst worshippers
- personal support (spiritual and practical)
- accessible clergy
- opportunities to learn, question, and challenge
- opportunities to volunteer and be involved beyond attending worship services
- sense of being part of something bigger and on a journey with like-minded people
- children's programming, youth group, young adult group

Participant Quotations: "It has become my family." "People accept me for who I am." "I love this place." "Saint Laurence is my anchor in uncertain times." "I feel God's presence here." "What would I do without Saint Laurence!"

Question #3: What would you like us to focus on next?

In response to the third question, the Listening Forward consultation clearly elicited 6 themes to guide the future focus, priorities, and actions of our Church. These focus areas are outlined below along with some suggestions for how the parish can move forward to achieve the aspirations expressed by consultation participants. These themes are ambitious and exciting opportunities to discover, grow, and strengthen Saint Laurence Church.

It was not the intention of the consultation process to identify problems to be solved. Rather it was our intention to create opportunities to build on the enthusiasm and passion of our clerical and lay leadership. Working in concert with our congregation, this will empower all of our members to become a meaningful part of Spirit-led initiatives to achieve our common goals and to develop our full potential.

There was a clear recognition that the work that flows from the opportunities described below must include the initiative, involvement, and contribution of parishioners. Some of this work will, of necessity, be clergy-led, but much of it falls within the competencies and capabilities of congregants and will require our active commitment to achieve the goals we set for ourselves in the Listening Forward conversations.

Like the other consultation questions, these areas of focus are interconnected and complementary. In order of priority, focus areas include:

Priority 1: Expand Worship

In a word, MORE. More opportunities for worship. More access to worship. More diversity in worship.

While parishioners appreciate the current offerings of worship services (primarily Sunday and Wednesday morning), they spoke eloquently of wanting worship services that are accessible during the evening and/or on non-traditional times over the weekend.

Worship services that incorporate Bible study were also identified, as was Bible study alone as an expression of worship. Continuing seasonal worship services (e.g. Lenten series or Advent series) is also strongly encouraged.

There was a perspective that smaller, more frequent on-going worship services allow for more enquiry and exploration individually and more relationship development collectively.

The “adult education” approach that characterizes the Wednesday morning worship service allows for parishioners to learn from each other, stimulating a more thoughtful, and in-depth worship experience and builds a stronger sense of familiarity and intimacy than traditional Sunday morning services.

Participants also asked for more diversity in worship. Suggestions for this included:

- Invite clergy from other denominations to offer the homily (to introduce other interpretations of Scripture)
- Incorporate Indigenous spirituality into our liturgy
- Incorporate children in worship services, as opposed to offering stand-alone children-led services
- Offer music-only services to allow the musical ministry to expand
- Offer contemplative and alternative forms of worship to introduce parishioners to diverse modes of worship

Worship is the cornerstone of Saint Laurence Church for many parishioners and building on this strength was strongly identified as a priority as we move forward.

Participant Quotations: “Worship at Saint Laurence is wide but not deep.” “I want to hear from other parishioners about how they understand the lesson.” “I would like the children to be a bigger part of the services.”

Priority 2: Create A Sense of Belonging

Consultation participants spoke appreciatively about the efforts we make to greet and welcome both newcomers to SLC as well as our long-term members. Special mention was made repeatedly about the team of greeters that volunteer for Sunday morning services.

There is a sense, however, that there is more work to be done to move beyond greeting and welcoming to truly encouraging everyone to become members our community. **Creating a sense of belonging is key to sustaining and growing Saint Laurence now and in the future.**

A number of ideas to create a sense of belonging were suggested, including:

- Create an orientation to SLC that introduces newcomers to the history, culture, practices, and people of Saint Laurence making them feel more at home in familiar surroundings (this idea is expanded under the SLC 101 section that follows)
- Create an “ambassadors” team that invites new people, in a co-ordinated, strategic way to participate in church activities to make connections and establish relationships. Intentional succession planning and mentorship were also identified as a way to create a smoother transition so long-time members can guide newer members into key roles.
- Expand the use of the member’s portal to provide information and updates about SLC that may be well known to long term members but is new to people joining our community

- Host a “Ways to Volunteer at SLC Trade Fair” to allow newcomers to learn more about volunteer opportunities within SLC and through our community partnerships; ensure a system for follow-up to place parishioners who volunteer
- Develop a concise set of roles and responsibilities for key parish positions so that volunteers understand what is asked and expected of them when deciding to expand their participation
- Expand short-term, ad hoc volunteer opportunities so that members who can not make a long-term commitment can participate as they are able without expectation of long-term service
- Improve our volunteer acknowledgement/recognition to reflect a culture of gratitude for service

Priority 3: Design and Deliver Knowledge Sharing Opportunities

Tied closely to the need to create a greater sense of belonging at Saint Laurence is the need to build a common base of understanding about our identity as a Church and as a part of the broader community.

There is a tremendous wealth of knowledge within the parish about SLC itself, the Anglican and Christian communities of which we are a part, and the surrounding neighbourhoods and communities-of-interest and/or identity. **Saint Laurence is blessed with knowledge keepers.**

Despite this, consultation participants often expressed feeling “at a loss” about how things work at Saint Laurence and described this as an obstacle to their greater involvement and meaningful participation.

One suggestion to address this gap is to design and deliver a short-course Saint Laurence Church 101. The components of this short-course (a series of 1-2 hour sessions delivered over 4 weeks) and repeated every other year could include:

- Meet the clergy
- Designing a worship service
- Liturgy de-mystified
- Understanding SLC history, culture, and governance

Whether this specific suggestion is accepted or another approach adopted, **it is imperative that an intentional, strategic approach is created to share the knowledge and wisdom so plentiful at SLC.**

Priority 4: Host Social Activities

Social activities foster social inclusion. Consultation participants expressed a willingness to organize and host social activities with the express intent of building friendships that can be sustained both inside and outside of SLC. Social activities for their own sake (i.e. without the benefit of a “religious” motivation) were described by many participants as a way get to know SLC better and feel more at home here.

This area of focus was specifically identified as one that does not necessarily require clerical leadership, or even participation, but where SLC could provide other forms of support (e.g. space, promotion, etc.)

Ideas for social activities included:

- Movie night
- Sing Along
- Walks, Hikes, Bike Rides
- Picnics

- Lectures
- Games night
- Field Trips

Participants who advocated for these types of activities stressed the need for casual, low-effort, free, frequent and diverse activities.

Priority 5: Expand the Role of the Pastoral Care Team

The Pastoral Care Team is acknowledged as a critically important part of Saint Laurence's work as a Christian community. Its work is highly valued and much appreciated. Participants recognized the skills and abilities that are required for this ministry. Many participants noted that SLC has an aging population that requires more pastoral support. Many participants also noted that SLC has many experienced pastoral care providers, including our current clergy, and retired clergy who now worship at SLC. Further, there was recognition that, as more of our members work fulltime, volunteer availability to undertake pastoral care is limited, especially for services like driving, hospital or hospice visiting, and connecting with house-bound parishioners.

Many participants expressed an interest in the work of the Pastoral Care Team but felt ill-equipped to take on the responsibilities of this ministry without teaching, mentoring, and coordination.

One suggestion for merging our need with our capacity in this important area is to undertake targeted outreach to identify volunteers who can commit to learning more about pastoral care under the guidance of our existing team members. Using a succession planning model to build confidence amongst new members by gentling introducing the various opportunities for pastoral care could be an important first step in helping parishioners to feel up to the tasks of this ministry.

Participant Quotation: "I'd really like to be part of this group because it offers both spiritual growth and practical support but I just don't feel ready."

Priority 6: Explore Our Relationship with Indigenous Communities

Many consultation participants expressed a sense of unfulfilled responsibility to learn more about indigenous communities in order to begin to develop meaningful, Indigenous-led relationships and partnerships.

There was a clear understanding that this is a process that is complex, measured, and exploratory.

Saint Laurence's history and current activities with respect to Indigenous community relationship development is not clear but there is a sense that some work has already been done and continues to be done.

Notwithstanding the confusion about our level of involvement to-date, **there is a hunger to pursue a greater level of education and exploration in this area.**

Suggestions for possible future steps include:

- Briefing on past and current SLC initiatives
- Facilitated reading group focusing on Indigenous writing
- Development of a SLC-designed land acknowledgement
- Inclusion of Indigenous spiritual practice in worship

Participant Quotations: “This work moves at the speed of trust.” “We keep talking about this but we don’t do enough.” “I feel we are falling short on this.”

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Saint Laurence Church members participated in the Listening Forward consultation process with remarkable generosity and thoughtfulness. Parishioners made time to participate and share their views and feelings with enthusiasm and candor. There was great clarity about priorities and forward focus. The consultation findings offer many ways for SLC to move into a period of renewed energy, engagement, and growth.

The 2025 SLC Vestry Meeting designated July and August 2025 for reflection on the findings of this process and report. Fall 2025 and the early months of 2026 are intended for further priority setting, planning, and implementation of those parts of the report that are feasible within our capacity and resources.

Whichever parts of this report the SLC congregation decides to take forward, there is much work to be done and much inspiration for doing it.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Taylor