

Crossroads United Church, located in Kingston, ON, adopted the following Purpose Statement at the time of its formation as a new congregation in 2010:

Purpose Statement

Crossroads United Church, as a congregation of the United Church of Canada, is a welcoming and supportive community of Christians that gathers to worship, seeks spiritual growth and humbly works to advance God's justice in the world.

The various parts of this statement were expanded into a more detailed Mission Statement (see below) that has served as our guide since then, and we are using it as a framework here for our Living Faith Story. Throughout the document (and particularly in the Appendix: “*Our Stories*”) you will see references and links to our website www.crossroadsunited.ca/ You are encouraged to explore the site to find out more about us and who we are.

First, however, is some information about our history and our administrative structure.

A brief history of Crossroads

Crossroads is located on the traditional territories of the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe peoples.

Crossroads United Church was created January 1, 2010 by the amalgamation of Queen Street United Church (a long established downtown church) and St. Margaret’s United Church (founded in 1953 in what was then the west end of the City of Kingston.) The amalgamation was prompted by declining memberships and financial problems at both congregations and serious building repair problems at Queen Street.

There were many meetings within each congregation and between representatives of the two congregations. Because of the building problems at Queen Street, we started to worship together in St Margaret’s building before the decision to amalgamate. The congregations agreed to amalgamate and to worship and work in St. Margaret’s building. A Statement of Mission and Purpose was agreed upon, as well as an agreed upon model of governance (Council with committees) and the name of Crossroads was chosen.

Queen Street U.C. sold its property and buildings. Some proceeds were allocated to Presbytery for projects, and some donated to Queen’s Theological College (QTC) for bursaries to people training for ministry. When QTC closed, Crossroads and Queen’s University agreed to transfer the capital of this donation to Emmanuel College in Toronto, leaving some unused investment income for chaplaincy at Queen’s. The rest of the proceeds of sale remained with Crossroads United Church. Some of this money has been used for building maintenance and recurring operating deficits; what is left is largely responsible for the health of Crossroads’ current Balance Sheet.

Administration

At the time of amalgamation the governance structure adopted for Crossroads was a traditional Council structure with many committees, similar to what each of the founding congregations had been using. But like many congregations our average age is increasing rather quickly, and while there are many people available to help with various tasks it is becoming difficult to recruit folk ready to take on leadership roles. Consequently it has become increasingly apparent that reliance on a myriad of committees is too cumbersome to maintain, and so we are moving toward a more streamlined structure with less emphasis on committees and more on action teams. A provisional structure is expected to be approved soon, and will continue to be examined.

Crossroads employs an Office Administrator for 14 hours per week, with regular office hours 8:30 – noon, Tuesday – Friday. Her office is near the entrance door so she is the welcoming presence that most weekday visitors first encounter at the church. She provides administrative support to the Minister and to the congregation's various teams and committees.

At the present time the staff each use document software independently installed on their computers, but a cloud-based shared office suite will soon be installed. For communication with congregational members the office has email addresses for most of them and telephone numbers for almost all of them; ordinary mail is used as necessary.

During the pandemic shutdown virtually all committee and group meetings have been held quite successfully via Zoom. However it proved too difficult for the Council itself to maintain regular meetings, and so a much smaller “Emergency Response Commission” (ERC) was established to do the work of the Council for as long as necessary. In particular the ERC receives regular financial reports from the church treasurer. As our financial statements show, regular church offerings have been maintained quite well. So despite the loss of significant rental income but thanks to significant government covid related grants our financial position has remained reasonably stable.

From our Mission Statement:

(a) Crossroads United Church is a congregation of the United Church of Canada.

Crossroads recognizes and values its participation as part of the larger conciliar body of the church. Both before and after amalgamation we are used to having ministers and lay members actively involved in higher courts of the church: Presbytery, Conference, Region, General Council.

More locally, our minister and some other United Church ministers in Kingston have jointly conducted shared studies through five-week ZOOM sessions open to members of all their churches. We have also participated in discussions about sharing staff such as an Office Administrator but so far the details of such a sharing have seemed unworkable. We are interested in considering further such possibilities of cooperation and collaboration.

(b) We are a welcoming and supportive community of Christians.

- 🕒 Seeking to be kind and caring
- 🕒 Affirming our own and others' self-worth in authentic relationships
- 🕒 Providing a place where all people can feel safe and welcome
- 🕒 Offering opportunities for fellowship

Early evidence of welcome and support at Crossroads was the happy unification of the two choirs into one stronger group even before the formal amalgamation. It was led by the directors of the two choirs. Some former members of the two congregations chose not to become part of Crossroads but most chose to join. Shared work on committees, tasks and activities promoted wider friendships, understanding, and cooperation. Crossroads is blessed to have many volunteers who contribute many hours in a great variety of activities. For example, our largest fund-raising and fun-raising event is our annual congregational bazaar: this is a major community-building event inherited from both congregations. Many members participate enthusiastically as suppliers of goods, as workers and shoppers. People from the wider community come to join the fun. (See more details in the “Our Stories” Appendix.)

With friendship and trust growing through shared activity, we stopped asking: “is she/he from Queen Street or from St. Margaret’s?”, instead asking “ is she/he willing and the right person for the job?” There was a willingness to accept changes. For example, St. Margaret’s had a “no stained glass” policy but Crossroads happily installed two treasured stained glass windows from Queen Street’s building in the former St. Margaret’s building. For another example, look for the brief “Amalgamation” story in the “Our Stories” Appendix where one member had her reservations turned to enthusiasm with the declaration that we were doing a new thing – all together. We like to think that that spirit continues as we continue to look forward to doing “New things – all together”.

In addition to the minister’s pastoral care activities, there is a phoning team that calls most of our members periodically (normally a few times a year but more often during the shutdowns). They call mainly to just keep in touch but also to pass on any church news items of particular interest or to hear any concerns that should be passed on to the minister. Recently a few phoners have had to leave the program, so some new phoners would be welcome. There is also an informal group of visitors who contact members living in retirement and long term care homes. Both former congregations brought aging memberships into the union so it is not surprising that we have had cases of illness and lost people due to death or moving in retirement. There has been support by church friends to individuals and families in such cases. Also during the pandemic shutdown we have been having a regular Sunday morning Zoom gathering open to all, featuring a general check-in and open discussion, and there are frequent opportunities then for personal support. The Crossroads congregation includes in its leadership and membership those who are openly part of the LGBTQ2+ community; there is “room for all in the shadow of God’s wing” (More Voices # 62). A formal process, like the one offered by Affirm United, to explore further the welcome offered by Crossroads would be considered as a next step for our congregation.”

We have been joined by many new members and adherents in the past 11 years. They have all expressed pleasure at the warm welcome they have received. Some have taken part in congregational work including creating this profile, organizing a pre-pandemic congregational photo album, outreach distribution of grocery gift cards to those in need, helping to video the online worship services, planning for post-pandemic re-entry to our building, and joining in the Sunday morning pandemic congregational Zoom chats.

One prime example of a caring and supportive activity, both for the Crossroads family and for the wider community is the Crossroads Wellness Program. This is described in Section (e) below, and more details can be found in the *Our Stories* Appendix.:

(c) We gather to worship,

- 🕒 Celebrating God's presence joyfully
- 🕒 Engaging all ages intentionally
- 🕒 Listening for God's wisdom in word, scripture and Christ's teachings
- 🕒 Praising God through music, prayer and the Sacraments

Video projection equipment is available in both our sanctuary and hall and has been used regularly for the last sixteen years in our normal live worship services in both locations for displaying hymn lyrics, video clips, and other components of worship.

Since in-house worship services had to be suspended during the pandemic shutdown, recorded online worship services have been produced weekly and are available via the church website and by Facebook and YouTube. We have the technical equipment (and now the experience) needed to stream live services, and expect to do this once in-house worship services recommence.

Crossroads' usual form of worship (whether live or online) is the traditional order of service with hymns (from Voices United and More Voices), prayers (typically led by the minister), scripture readings (using a variety of translations), sermon, additional instrumental or vocal music, and there is frequently a "Moment for Mission" time. Communion is usually, but not always, by intinction. The congregation appreciates thoughtful biblically-based sermons applied to current issues in our world, showing familiarity with traditional understandings and ready to share newer understandings. The congregation comfortably shares a variety of theological positions, from conservative to progressive, but it is fair to say the most common is the usual moderate-liberal United Church stance.

In consultation with the music directors and Worship Committee, there will occasionally be visiting outside musical groups or, rather more rarely, visiting outside speakers. With the proliferation of online activity during the Covid-19 shutdown there has been some increased sharing of worship resources among some local congregations, with the hope of more to come.

Crossroads has an enthusiastic choir working with our two music directors, and during the shutdown has been able to contribute small groups and soloists to the regular weekly recorded services. The choir also has a two octave set of chimes (a memorial gift from a congregant) that can occasionally be used to augment the usual organ/piano/clarinet music (see, for instance, the 2021 [Easter Sunday service](#) (about 45 minutes in). Crossroads is also fortunate to have an unofficial composer-in-residence who has written some [30 original hymns](#).

In addition to musical offerings, there is variable lay participation in Sunday services. Things have been different during pandemic on-line worship times, but in “normal” times we regularly have lay scripture readers, moment for mission speakers, congregational reports on such things as finances and outreach grants, etc.

Since there have been very few children in the congregation for some time, the current minister has chosen to use the corresponding “children's time” for a more general conversation time with all the folk present. This has worked well during ‘normal’ times, but had to be suspended during the shutdown and was partially replaced by an open Zoom gathering every Sunday morning just prior to the online service.

Occasional services with a very different size, place, time, format have been given in particular circumstances (e.g. Blue Christmas service), and they have been well received for their purpose.

The minister is encouraged and expected to take full advantage of the provisions for study leave and continuing education. When the minister is away, services may be led by visiting preachers, or by groups or individuals from the congregation, or by shared services with other congregations.

(d) We seek spiritual growth.

🕒 Learning through youth worship and Sunday School, (*currently difficult, see below)

🕒 Seeking meaning and understanding through questions, reflection and discussion

🕒 Growing through Bible study and other study groups

🕒 Being open to new opportunities for spiritual development and expression

Several of the faith formation and community group activities have had to be suspended during the Covid-19 lock down, such as our Bible Study group, our monthly Breakfast Group, and our monthly Luncheon group. But we hope most of these will resume once physical gathering is possible again. Other new study group activities using Zoom have been organized under the leadership of our minister as part of an informal consortium of local United Church clergy. These inter-congregational activities have been well received, and there is hope that they might expand into more general inter-congregational activity and cooperation. In general our various study group activities are led sometimes by the minister and sometimes by lay people. Any costs involve, e.g. for study books, are

usually, but not always, borne by the participants. It is fair to say these activities do not usually draw big crowds, but are appreciated by those who do participate.

One of the important results of having these group gatherings to talk together is the bonding and sense of community that is generated. The same positive effect is often observed with other groups who gather for “non-study”, possibly for “church-work” activities (like the annual Bazaar), and end up chatting with each other about all sorts of things (not generally about theological issues, but often about community building and social justice issues).

* One of the disappointments at Crossroads over the last several years is that one of our Mission statements, namely “*Learning through youth worship and Sunday School*” has proved very difficult to realize. This had been our intention, and both founding congregations had (and we still have) willing and able volunteers. Also, in the 1990’s St. Margaret’s had hired a (non-recognized) DLM to promote this work. At first it worked quite well and her work expanded to create activities for Presbytery teenage youth (volleyball tournaments, occasionally leading worship in some churches). Her job also included some adult programming.

At amalgamation Crossroads included this position, with the same person working with volunteers from both founding congregations. However the flow of children and youth was already dwindling to only a very occasional child; their parents were not attending church and other Sunday activities proved too big an attraction. Maintaining the nearly full-time paid position was a big factor in an annual deficit. When the DLM approached a normal retirement birthday in 2018 we decided not to extend the position.

(e) We humbly work to advance God's justice in the world.

- 🕒 Living with respect in God's creation
- 🕒 Seeking to understand and respond to the needs of others locally and globally
- 🕒 Sharing ourselves, our time, talent and treasures through outreach initiatives
- 🕒 Promoting the Mission and Service of the United Church of Canada
- 🕒 Supporting the peaceful resolution of human conflict

One particularly bold (at the time) step toward living with respect in creation was the [installation of solar roof panels](#) in 2012. The link to the web page tells the story, and our financial income reports show that it has been a win-win for us financially and in the fight against global warming.

Both founding congregations had commitments to outreach, and Crossroads has continued these commitments. We have had an Outreach, Justice and Advocacy Committee, but as with many committees it struggles to maintain optimal viability. It is annually allocated \$7,000 in our Operating budget and continues to selectively give grants to applying charities, mostly local. The committee

reports to the congregation and aims to raise awareness of issues like the proposed Guaranteed Annual Income.

One Wednesday morning each month (even through the pandemic) a small team distributes up to 30 grocery vouchers for \$25 (up from \$20 a year ago) to needy persons who line up to receive them; they are paid for by Benevolent Fund contributions (\$6,000 in 2020 - outside the Operating Budget). Crossroads has annually provided 48 generous Christmas hampers as part of a city-wide program coordinated by the Salvation Army. Our members donate money for the food, and pack and distribute the hampers to households identified by the SA. In 2020 the pandemic made it impossible to proceed as in the past, so the SA decided to give generous grocery gift cards to each household. In 2020 Crossroads raised \$3300 by special contributions to give to SA for this – close to our previous usual annual cost. A small Crossroads team has acted as servers at a SA “Bread of Life” end-of-the month dinner in an economically challenged neighbourhood of Kingston, but this was suspended because of the pandemic.

Crossroads has also provided excellent space in our Hall or meeting rooms for free or at nominal cost to community groups such as AA, Al Anon, Brownies, an Immigrant Youth program, and others. (We also receive significant income from some renters of space who pay realistic rents for the space.) It is not apparent how demand for this space will rebound after the pandemic but our space, with ample parking is very attractive. We hope to develop this kind of use, both for charitable activities and for rental income.

To provide care for people in our wider community, an enthusiastic volunteer with the help of other volunteers created a Wellness Program with some emphasis on seniors. It includes a variety of fitness classes led by paid qualified instructors and some seminars on particular issues presented by professionals. Participants include some Crossroads people but more from the wider community. The program has been funded by free-will contributions from participants and during the pandemic has continued on Zoom. As noted earlier, more details may be found in the Appendix.

Crossroads Mission and Service contribution has been determined by voluntary contributions and not included as a budget item. Individual contributions have been encouraged in our modest financial campaigns and by occasional Moments for Mission, but not vigorously promoted. Our contribution has declined from \$49,959 in 2010 to \$21,024 in 2020, a more rapid decline than the decline in contributions for Operating. Some causes of decline are people changing their priority due to Operating deficits, deaths or moves of some older generous supporters of M&S, and some voiced reaction to the change from Presbytery dues to congregational allocations.

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Brief alert re the Statistics section of the Profile: The attendance numbers in the Statistics section of the profile were reported very shortly after the beginning of the covid shutdown, just after we started our online recorded services. At that time we had no idea how many folk were watching, and so the reported weekly attendance (15) was not much more than the number of people involved in producing and posting the recordings. A hopefully more representative number would be the average weekly attendance reported the previous year, namely 67.

OUR STORIES

Appendix to Crossroads Living Faith Story

During the writing of the Crossroads Profile, there was an open invitation for people to send in stories, remembrances, memorable experiences at Crossroads. There are many, many, such stories, but here are the ones that got put to paper. At the end of these fairly short stories are two longer ones about our annual Fall Bazaar and more information about Crossroads Wellness Program.

Fall and Spring Yard Cleanup

On our hands and knees, pulling weeds, raking leaves, we laugh, we chat, we listen. We often hear the “real story of who we are”. We grow in faith, service and friendship. Some folks even arrive on time, hoping to get their favourite spot in the yard/garden to cultivate or to groom!

As we reach the finish line with that last bag of yard waste, we are rewarded with the annual delicious BBQ hot dog, lovingly prepared by a member of the Crossroads Community of Faith. With great anticipation, gardeners ask “What time is lunch served?”

Crossroads Christmas Eve Pageant

A highlight of our technological journey through the pandemic was the performance of a Christmas Eve pageant entitled By God’s Grace. It was written for the occasion by the chair of our Worship Committee, performed remotely by others on the committee, and enjoyed by children of all ages. It was a resounding success and a wonderful example of Crossroads’ teamwork meeting technology meeting “togetherness”.

Apparently no one involved is planning to give up their day job, but you can check out the [2020 Christmas Eve Service](#) . (The pageant is about 20 minutes into the service.)

Amalgamation

Amalgamation is never an easy decision, two churches are asked to put their individual histories into the books, then create something “new”. I had my reservations until a member from one of the congregations said (I can’t guarantee the exact words) “this shouldn’t be difficult because we are all sisters and brothers of the same church”. I was won over. The willingness to create something new is a goal worth pursuing.

Food/Fellowship/Family

Whether it’s our annual Pork Dinner or Pancake Supper, the Crossroads family joins with community in the sharing of a delicious meal or “to go”. As usual, behind the scenes workers share

tasks and companionship with joy. In the words of one of the volunteers “There’s just something about hands in dishwater and helping each other.” Through the thoughtful coordination and recruiting skills of one of our members, these events have also provided an opportunity for a group of high school students to volunteer and work with a team of dedicated individuals.

A Personal Wellness Story

As part of the Wellness Program at Crossroads we had many speakers who spoke on many subjects. One session was about MAID (medical assistance in dying). Our reverend spoke so passionately about this topic that both my husband and I really were impressed and thought this is how we would like our lives to end.

Little did we know that within two years he would be diagnosed with a very serious lung disease. When he became very ill, the first person he spoke to was our caring reverend. They had several conversations, then, with the help of our physician he made his decision to have medical assistance in death. It was so wonderful, so peaceful and our daughter and I each held his hands as we said to each other “We love you” over and over again. In fact, he was trying to tell the doctor a joke as he passed away so peacefully. We were so thankful for our pastor for taking part in this most important family discussion.

Music and Crossroads

Where do I start?

Well, my church is music – my music IS my church! But that is not the beginning; that is the beginning, the middle and the end of my story.

The real beginning is the beginning of my life. My mother was a wonderful pianist and organist, who served as organist at Catarqui United Church, from time to time, from my birth until the 1950s when St. Margaret’s United Church came into being in Duncan McArthur Public School. I remember being present and transfixed when she played that pump organ and it was such fun to operate the pump mechanism, with my father’s help. My parents were members of St. Margaret’s until their deaths in 1998 and 2000. My father and I sang in the adult choir together from the time I was 16 until very shortly before his death.

I was born into and raised on church music. I love our church music! To be completely honest, I’m not sure I would participate in formal ‘church’ should I not be able to be involved in the music.

The music at St. Margaret’s was amazing. And subsequently the music here at Crossroads is even more amazing, if that’s possible. We have wonderful Directors of Music and they do unbelievable things with our congregation and our little choir. What could be more thrilling than combining with my church choir family, each member with chimes at hand, as we lift our voices and chimes in praise of God? Absolutely nothing!

Crossroads United Church Fall Bazaar

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas !

in, around, and beyond Crossroads United Church.

The crowds gather in long lines waiting for the bell to ring and the doors to magically open wide! The workers must be vigilant with a careful eye on the clock because our shoppers have their favourite tables and visibly want to be first in line !

The excitement begins with a frantic rush to the elaborate jewelry table, an experience to behold! The shoppers arrive with cash , cheques, and even magnifying glasses to assess the quality of the silver, the gold and the pearls. “Is this bracelet 92.5% silver, are these earrings 24K or just 14K”?

Imagine a beautiful simulated pearl brooch purchased by a young girl for \$1.50 as a Christmas gift for her grandmother. A symbol of family love, and a gift to treasure!

Our Annual Crossroads Fall Bazaar encompasses a Christmas theme featuring:

Baked Goods :

Deli Products

Jams, Jellies, Preserves, and Candy

Delicious Shortbread (including gluten free)

Collectables , Treasures , Home Decor , and Other Gifts

An Elaborate Display of Vintage and Costume Jewelry

Gently Used Items on Our Gift Table

Crafts, House Plants, Christmas Decor

Silent Auction

Gift Baskets and Gift Certificates

Something for Everyone !

When your shopping is done, remember our Crossroads Café!

If your feet are tired, and your tummy says hungry, you can stop at our Soup Kitchen for a bowl of homemade soup, roll, dessert, and coffee/ tea/ juice.

All of the above surrounds you in an atmosphere of fun and merriment to get you in the Christmas spirit!

Tis the season to be merry so please come in and celebrate with us!

Crossroads Wellness Program

A Sense of Community - In - Around - and Beyond Crossroads Community of Faith

The Crossroads Wellness Program began in 2018 as an senior's exercise program, and since then has grown beyond all expectations into a wide collection of self care programs. Participants include many from the community as well as our own members. Some have commented that whereas they had felt isolated and belonging nowhere, now they feel part of a happy welcoming community.

“A Program Like No Other”

An experience celebrating hope, acceptance, community, friendships, education, support, fun, and joy! Noteworthy features include: a warm welcome, no fee requirements, give what you can when you can, come, share your talents .

The Crossroads Wellness Program has the ability and the will, to address many needs: spiritual, physical, social, intellectual, and emotional. And the Crossroads Wellness programming highlights the well-being (self care) of the participants. Working collaboratively with community organizations including health-related services, we have nurtured a community spirit of outrageous hospitality. Open hearts, open doors, generosity, love, acceptance, and good humour have become a well known Crossroads signature.

What began as a tiny mustard seed, a pilot project has bloomed into a vibrant, caring, and loving community within Crossroads United Church, and in our community at large. The Crossroads United Church Wellness Program is an invaluable adventure helping to take care of body, mind, and spirit.

The Crossroads Wellness Program is one to celebrate !

An Enthusiastic New Couple

"When we first arrived in the city of Kingston we were excited to have a number of United Churches to explore. Crossroads was the first one we checked out and especially liked both the minister and the choir. The next church scored high on the music front too but lacked the warmth of welcome we had previously received. Our third service was for convenience, back at Crossroads and once again we loved it. We did not feel the need to try out yet another church. Why mess with perfection?!"

Profile Team: Dan Norman, Gloria Whitehead, Hal Holt, Norman Rice, Sue Taylor,
Rev. Phil Wilson (Regional Liaison)

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