

# PARISH HOUSE

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Newmarket Church of Christ

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## CONNECTING POINTS

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I have a vivid memory of receiving a coloring book with a box of crayons. I'm not sure what age or what occasion; I simply remember receiving a coloring book and a box of crayons.

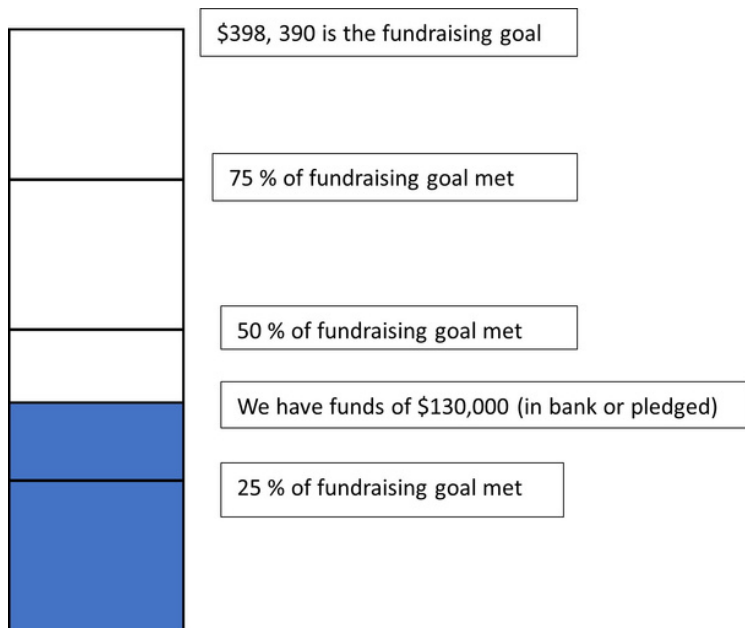
With great excitement, I opened up the coloring book ready to color within the lines, and to my horror, there were simply dots with small numbers. *What is this?* I cried out. Someone leans over, looks at the coloring page and says, "*Connect the dots.*"

# Parish House Financial Update

After years of planning and having COVID slow the speed of implementing the Parish House vision, we've now reach the point where we are actively raising funds for this vision. Our goal is to raise three years of financial support before we call a Parish House minister. To date, between members of the Newmarket Church of Christ and those who are early adopters of the Parish house vision, we have almost reached 1/3 of our fundraising goal.

All Canadian donors will receive a tax receipt. We are currently working towards seeking a partnership so that all individual American donors will also receive a tax receipt.

If you know of congregations that are looking to financially support mission work, please let us know. We will either travel to meet with the respective congregations, or, if desirable, invite respective congregations to visit with us and to see the mission work we are doing. For all interested individual, congregational or foundations, we are able to set up a zoom meeting to discuss.



## The Neighbourhood

Continuing what we started in volume 5.1, we'll paint a picture of the neighbourhood that the Parish House will focus on. The neighbourhood covers 500+ homes and 8 high rise condominiums and apartment buildings in roughly a three square mile radius.



Central to the neighbourhood is Maple Leaf Public School. This school serves children from grades JK through grade 8. Over the last fifteen years, we've worked hard at developing a high level of trust, both with the admin and staff of the school, and the children.

The Parish House minister will continue to be a presence within the school community.

# Connecting Points, cont'd

"What do I do?"

"It's easy. Find the dot with the number one. Then find the dot with number two and connect the dots. Eventually what will happen is a picture will emerge when all the dots are connected."

I've been playing around with the image of the church connecting the dots. Living within a post-Christian context where many, if not most people make sense of their lives without God, the church needs to think seriously about the connecting points we have with our neighbours, with each other and with God.

## *Connecting With Our Neighbours*

Think of your community of faith. What are the connecting points your faith community has with your neighbours? Is it a community garden? Shared meals? Shared park for children? The longer we live in a context where more and more people do not have a Christian belief structure and no longer participate in Christian worship, the church needs to pay attention the connecting points we have with our neighbours. I'll never forget the one time we shared a fundraising meal with our neighbours. I was standing in line and a self-professing atheist says to me, "If the church keeps what it's doing, I might have to rethink my belief in God."

## *Connecting With Each Other*

The church is a community. In the language of the apostle Paul, the church is a body. With this, in what ways is the church connecting with each other? In what ways is the younger generations connecting with the older generations? In what ways are the rich connecting with the poor? In what ways are the elders connecting with those whom they are shepherding? How is the church concentrating on building connecting points so that people, who are constructing a God-centered identity, are connecting with each other?

## *Connecting with God*

What do we think would happen if a married couple did not find time to connect with each other? Would it be safe to assume that at some point in time the marriage would enter into some turbulent waters? Or, using a sports analogy, if the coach of the baseball team didn't find ways to connect with the players, would the coach be able to develop the players to their fullest potential? Probably not!

The same can be said about our God-centered identity. If we are not paying attention to the ways in which we are connecting with God, why would we be surprised if our God-centered identity is blurred, or worse, lost? Thus, we must ask, what are the connecting points we have with God? And what kind of connecting points are we providing for our children to connect with God?

## **To What End?**

Where are the connecting points leading us? What kind of picture is being created as we connect the dots together? Let me propose one picture. But first, let me say that this isn't the

only picture being created--when the connecting dots are intertwined or move in different directions, new pictures emerge. With this, let me propose one picture that could emerge if the dots are connected properly: *one that loves God and neighbour.*

If we have the proper connecting points with our neighbours, each other and with God, it's inconceivable that we would be painted into a picture of hate, racism, bigotry, selfishness . . . but it's very conceivable that we would be painted into a picture of love, welcome, openness, generosity. If such a picture is painted of our lives, it's a painting that loves both God and neighbour.

A teacher of the law came up to Jesus and asked, "*What's the greatest command?*" And the response was, "Love God and neighbour." As I think about the different connecting points we are paying attention to (both personally and corporately), I can't help but see an emerging picture that loves God and neighbour.

O God,  
Just as the earth displays the work of your hands,  
Help our lives to display the work of the cross.

As we seek to live deeper into your image and to foster an identity in you,  
Help us to understand how you call us:  
To love our neighbour  
To live into relationships with the wider body of Christ  
To grow deeper into you

Paint our lives into a picture that displays a love for both You and neighbour.  
In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

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During the summer, and running into the fall, we're experimenting with a "pay what you can" pop-up farmers market. Many of our neighbours struggle with food security. This is one way we are living into and proclaiming God's in-breaking kingdom



"To be most effective in bringing about change in a community or a neighborhood, it helps if you live there."

Larry James, *The Wealth of the poor*

**NEWMARKET  
CHURCH OF  
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God through friendship  
with the neighbourhood

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