

## Christ First Living Faith Story

***We are seeking our place in a changing world.  
We are caring and connected, spiritually engaged, and community focused.  
And—  
We know we are not alone!***

**Christ First** is an energetic faith community in south Mississauga formed through the recent amalgamation of two well-established churches. Together, we have almost four hundred years of history, and are moving forward with fresh excitement towards our shared future. God is calling us to find new ways of being church with each other, in our community, and in the world. We are resilient, communal, and adaptable to change.

We know how to reach out with God's love to others. We are guided by our vision based on the three pillars of *Spiritually Engaged, Community Focused* and *Caring and Connected*. With our healthy financial resources, two campuses, and dedicated church community, we are well positioned to achieve our objectives.

We are optimistic for our future and our Future Planning Group has been exploring and planning how we move forward. However, we acknowledge there are some challenges. Our congregation is aging and our numbers diminishing, with very few young families joining our ranks.

In order to seek new ways to attract and engage with that specific demographic, we are looking for someone who will collaborate with us, to create partnerships for stability in the future, and motivate innovative ways of reaching beyond our walls. Our Property Planning Ministry has already started the process and is exploring how we may reach out and serve the community. We are fortunate to have many gifted and skilled lay leaders who are working to ensure that Christ First has a vibrant presence in our community.

### Spiritually Engaged

The believer, the curious, and the skeptic... Christ First welcomes all who seek meaning in their lives. We believe that God's love is revealed to us in Jesus, and this faith provides us with a firm foundation to live our lives by the Way of Jesus.



The Christ First community looks for spiritual engagement through varied worship experiences, strong spiritual leadership, inspirational preaching, and a vibrant music program. We have two campuses where a multitude of services, events, meetings, camps, and music create a variety of opportunities that enable people to grow and develop in their personal faith journeys. We offer two regular Sunday morning worship services. The 9:02 Express contemporary service is casual in nature, and has an in-house band. It plays

an important role in helping us attract young families our church needs to grow into the future. Our second service observes a traditional style of worship. With COVID-19, we have started the process of digital ministry. Both services are recorded on YouTube and available on-line through our website. On-line ministry provides a myriad of opportunities to reach and connect with a wider community.

Christ First recognizes that faith formation and education happen at all ages and stages of life. We have strong lay leaders developing our programs for both children and adults. Our youth program leader is growing our children’s programs, through creative approaches such as a Breakfast Club for kids in kindergarten to grade five that takes place during the 9:02 Express service.

Adults have a variety of activities to choose from. Our minister emeritus is leading a three-year Bible study program of the “Sayings of Jesus”. The Seekers, a UCW unit, offers opportunities for study on a variety of topics such as Women in the Bible and the work of the national church in Palestine and Israel.

## Community Focused

Our faith is a living faith, and we express our commitment to the calls of the gospel with active, thoughtful involvement in our community. South Mississauga has many in need, and we want to leverage our resources to strengthen our outreach and our community. We are actively seeking ways to build new partnerships with other faith communities, political leaders at all levels of government, and organizations in the community to help us move forward with our social justice, outreach, and advocacy priorities.

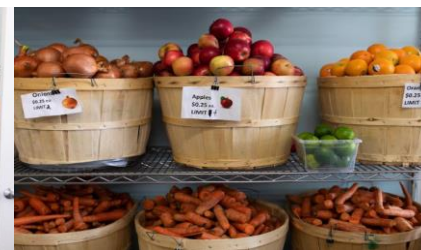


Through our two campuses we have presence in our community. Our buildings are used by for-profit and non-profit groups and are hives of activity on any given day. Our annual Spring Thing garage sale and Christmas market raise



substantial funds for the church and draw hundreds from all over Mississauga. We give local non-profits the opportunity to set up tables at the sale to garner greater exposure.

As founding members of The Compass foodbank, we work in partnership with 16 other local churches providing financial and volunteer resources. A designated portion of our budget goes to The Compass to help them in their work supporting those living on the margins in south Mississauga.



Affordable housing is a key social justice issue of our time, especially in a changing community like south Mississauga. In this way, the spirit is moving - calling us to bless others as we are so blessed. With the security and development potential of our real estate holdings, a healthy financial situation, and volunteers with diverse and valuable skill sets, we are able to explore, plan and dream. We are looking at the possibility of creating a community outreach and social justice hub at our Port Credit campus

which has access to good public transportation and other services. Working with The Compass foodbank and neighbouring churches, this “Care and Worship Centre” would help address the urgent housing needs of families experiencing challenges living in south Mississauga.

In addition to social justice, our community outreach efforts help others on many different levels. The Church Community Volunteers (CCV) group is a partnership of seven churches who arrange rides for appointments. They have been operating out of our Clarkson campus for many years. Twice monthly, members go to a local long-term care facility and sing familiar old tunes with their residents. We support other local groups such as the Open Door which provides food, clothing and other support for vulnerable people.

We are also enthusiastic supporters of programs that help those in need outside of Canada, such as the Bighead River Foodgrains Bank Growing Project, and Mission and Service. As a church we have allocated thirteen percent (13%) of our identified givings for Mission and Service.

As we seek to raise our profile in the community, we have updated our brand as a new pastoral charge to reflect our shared vision on how we move forward into the future. Our new logo and website are designed to showcase how we are living out our three pillars. The fresh new look of the website portrays Christ First as modern and forward-looking in our approach to being church.

## Caring and Connected

What do you need from us? Christ First is committed to being a caring community - a part of the life journeys of our members, in good times and bad. We are inclusive and welcome all who want to join us. We are an older congregation and there is interest and support in strengthening pastoral care in the next few years. Our part-time Pastoral Care Minister helps us meet our current needs. Members also provide significant pastoral care to each other. We have a prayer shawl ministry and deliver soup to those who need support. Our Congregational Visitors team routinely makes calls to members to let them know they are not alone. Our funeral committee organizes funeral receptions to provide much-needed support for families.

We are there for those in crisis. When the Canadian government made the commitment to provide a safe haven for refugees from the Middle East, both former congregations stepped up and sponsored families in partnership with other faith communities. It was both a humbling and rewarding experience to help these young immigrant families acclimatize to life in Canada. Today, they are thriving and happy and that makes us proud. We continue our mission as we are currently involved in sponsoring another member of our Syrian family to come to Canada.



In collaboration with the Compass, our apartment at the Clarkson Campus has been offered to help a family in transition. Finding affordable housing in Mississauga is difficult, especially when the vacancy rate is less than one percent.

Strong connections mean a strong congregation, and we have worked hard since amalgamating to build a welcoming community through spiritual and social events and regular communications. We have a very active UCW with three units, as well as other social groups for men, women, and seniors. There are many opportunities to get to know each other through our many activities. For example, members of Sip 'n Serve enjoy the camaraderie of a group of retirees using their gifts and skills to maintain and enhance our buildings, grounds and gardens. Our Welcoming and Fellowship Committee plans events for the whole congregation such as our yearly fall chicken barbecue, Christmas potluck, pancake supper

and Lunch on the Lawn. At any time, a special coffee hour or a lunch may be served to mark a special occasion.

We use weekly e-blasts, service bulletins, memos, mailings, The Happenings newsletter, a public Facebook page, a members-only group Facebook page and our website to keep in touch with members. They receive the latest news on church activities, Council decisions, and messages from the Minister. With COVID-19, video conferencing has become another popular option for communicating.

## **The Future is Calling**

Members of the church community are optimistic about the future of Christ First. The Church Council was fortunate to have had the full support of the congregation as they led us courageously through the first year of amalgamation. We have embraced change and are ready to take the next step forward in reaching our potential as a church.

We are in need of strong spiritual leadership to help us fulfill our mission and vision. We seek an entrepreneurial lead minister with resilience, adaptability, emotional strength, and the ability to channel the considerable resources and enthusiasm of our community into a spirit-filled, bright future.

The spirit is up to something in south Mississauga... and we will answer the call.