

Some Thoughts on the Hub Church

What is a Hub Church?

We were named a 'hub church' by the DTT in February 2010, but to my knowledge no one has ever told us what that means. We are a hub to what? Potentially it was to St Andrews, but that is unlikely to happen. So we have a problem, how do we 'hub' and what do we 'hub' to?

How do we define hub?

Buried in every problem there is an opportunity, and in this problem our opportunity is that in the absence of any official definition, we can define it ourselves. We have the opportunity to say 'this is what a hub church is, and this is how we will make it happen.'

According to the Thesaurus 'hub' can be defined as:

focal-point, focus, heart, mainstream, middle of the road, midpoint, navel, etc.

All of which imply being at the centre, and attracting, drawing or pulling things towards you, like a *magnet*. I call this the **A** strategy.

Or it can be defined as:

A pivot place, radial point, root, etc.

All of which imply being dynamic and growing or leading the way, like our *sun* emanating light and warmth, as the hub of our universe. I call this the **B** strategy.

I think that in the Cowichan Valley at this time, we should be opting for strategy **B** rather than strategy **A**. But we will get back to this later.

Living With Change.

Change! We have to live with it whether we like it or not. Change is a law of nature and it happens whether we want it to or not; it happens when we do something, and it happens even when we do nothing. We have two choices with change: accept it when it happens (with or without grumbles), or do something to try to influence or control it.

So what changes are we facing?

The Anglican Church was once a major force and spiritual leader in the Cowichan Valley. This is no longer true, as the number of parishes and congregation sizes are declining.

The population of the Cowichan Valley is increasing and clusters of new housing developments are springing up around the valley from Shawnigan Lake to Lake Cowichan.

The role of St John's has changed from being the spiritual centre of the farming community of Cobble Hill, to being a rural church amid the growing communities of Cobble Hill, Mill Bay and Shawnigan Lake. And it has recently been designated the hub church for South Cowichan.

Some Thoughts on the Hub Church

What choices do we have?

We can choose the **A** strategy or the **B** strategy as outlined above.

The **A** strategy implies a *status quo* approach, and it is obvious that at the moment we are firmly entrenched in strategy **A**. Examples of this are our *Spring Open House and Tea* and *September Fest*. In both cases we throw open our doors (and arms) and say to the community, 'welcome, come and join us'. And, fortunately, a lot of people do come, but not many come back the next Sunday.

This approach relies heavily on advertising, and that is not a particularly successful way to fill the pews, as it only appeals to people who are looking for a church (the minority) and has little or no effect on people who are not looking for a church (the majority). Advertising works best when people are in the market for that product. But for congregation building, strategy **A** does not work. At present we are certainly acting like a hub; a centre. But the centre of what?

The **B** strategy implies that we radiate or reach outwards; that is, go to where the people are. For example, the *Cobble Hill Fair* has been running for over 100 years, and in August 28-29 it will be celebrating its 101st Fair at the Cobble Hill Fairgrounds. The *Fair* has a big turnout, including many families, some of whom will be new to the valley, and many young people who are there as members of the 4H Club. If we want to go where the people are, that's where they'll be at the end of August.

If we look at the Cowichan Valley from Duncan south, it is well served with religious services of all denominations (*see page 6*). When we look at this list of services from a 'strategy **A**' point of view, these churches are our *competition*, and they are the people we have to beat if we want to attract the many Valley newcomers to our church. In fact these other churches may have exactly the same **A** strategy, so we will also have to outsmart them to tap into this market*.

However, if we look at the list from a 'strategy **B**' point of view, these churches are no longer our competition, but our '*brothers and sisters in Christ*' and our allies if we want to attract the Valley newcomers into church. We should be joining with these other churches to form a *Spiritual Union* for South Cowichan. By working with these other churches, sharing limited resources, sharing ideas and energy, we may all share this market.

The important thing is to get people into the Churches first, and then let them shop around until they find services to suit their needs.

So, how do we get the people into the churches?

We join with these other churches (*Spiritual Union*) to:

- prepare joint welcoming literature to be distributed to all newcomers to the valley (we could partner with *Welcome Wagon*).
- do joint door-to-door visitations,
- hold joint services,
- sponsor joint community events,
- provide joint programs for youth, and for the aged,
- provide joint pastoral care, etc.

* When we are using advertising or other methods for congregation building, we are, in effect 'marketing'.

Some Thoughts on the Hub Church

One other way, is to follow the example of the Toronto Caravan cultural festival. Every year the many ethnic groups in the Greater Toronto Area set up pavilions around the city that display their cultures, and showcase their arts and cooking. This gives the people of Toronto a chance to experience the various nationalities and sample their artistic and food delicacies. Instead of having our Open House, we could combine with the other churches in the Cowichan Valley and create a 'Christian Caravan' and invite the people of the valley to sample all of our Christian cultures, hospitality, and places of worship. Each church would hold an *Open House* on the same day and the public would be invited to tour the churches. The combined efforts of many churches, with their combined advertising, would be no more expensive in time and energy, but more effective than our Open House.

Similarly, a combined effort with other churches for a *September Fest*, held in a neutral venue, such as Cobble Hill Farmer's Hall, would be good for us at a time when we are finding it more and more difficult to get people to run it.

Getting there from here.

So how do we change from being inward looking to outward looking? How do we get there from here? First we have to find out where 'here' is. I don't know where we are at this time, and I suspect you don't either. I hear repeatedly that we are a 'growing church,' and we are advertising ourselves as such (though truth is not often a requirement in advertising). My sense is that we are shrinking, and that our demographics are such that we will shrink further. However, if we keep repeating 'we are a growing church' often enough, we can sit and believe it as the pews empty around us.

St John's, like most other churches, is run by volunteers, and I think the number of our volunteers is dwindling, leaving the work to fewer people. I did a rough analysis* of our current lay support, that is, the Lay Assistants, Chalice Bearers, Readers, Intercessors, Sidespersons, Greeters, Altar Guild, Wardens, etc. An approximation of the current distribution of the age ranges is shown in the table below. This table also projects the age distribution five years hence, and ten years hence.

A close look at the table (*see below*) shows that currently we have about 14% of our lay support under 50 years of age. However, we have about 18% over 80, and in five years this number grows to 39%, and to 53% in ten years. In a growing church the under-50s numbers would be increasing to compensate the aging of our congregation. But I don't see this happening at present. Where are all the under-50s? Where are the lay support trainees? Where are the young volunteers?

St John's Lay Support – Age Distribution

Age Range	Now	In 5 Years	In 10 Years
<40	4%	3%	1%
40-50	10%	7%	5%
50-60	6%	8%	8%
60-70	20%	13%	11%
70-80	42%	30%	22%
80-90	18%	30%	30%
90+	0%	9%	23%
Total	100%	100%	100%

* This is based on my guess of an individual's age range, and taking the low end of that range, e.g. 65-70 is taken as 65, and 75-80 is taken as 75, and so on.

Some Thoughts on the Hub Church

These figures may not be accurate, but the only way to get an accurate picture, of where we are and where we are going, is to do a church audit (*see below*).

Once we have a good look at ourselves we will be in a better position to decide whether we are going to opt for an **A** strategy or a **B** strategy. We do have a choice, and we should make it an informed choice.

So what should we do?

1. Make a study of where we are now (church audit).
2. Make a plan for where we want to go (strategy A or B).
3. Make it happen.

This requires leadership and, since the canons of our church gives this power to the incumbent, supported by the wardens; this is where the leadership must come from.

And if we choose to meet with other church leaders in the Cowichan Valley to participate in joint endeavours it is our Rector who must represent us (supported by the church leadership). This vision and leadership cannot be provided by laypersons; they do not have spiritual authority. Thus it will require decisive and energetic leadership from the Rector.

I am not advocating increasing the size of our church, but I do think that if we want St John's to remain a viable place of worship, we must take steps to prevent it from shrinking like other Anglican parishes in the Cowichan Valley.

Thank you for taking time to read this.

Some Thoughts on the Hub Church

The Church Audit

A good church audit would involve us having the courage to ask some frank questions, such as:

What is the size of the congregation?

What is the average service attendance?

- At 8:00 am
- At 9:15 am
- At 10:00 am
- At 11:00 am
- At 7:00 pm

Are these the best service times?

Should they be the same times all year round?

How many people have we gained in the past 3 years?

How many people have we lost in the past 3 years?

How many people will we have (based on the above trends) in 5 years? 10 years?

How many people do we want?

Are the congregation happy with:

- The Liturgy?
- The Sermons?
- The Music?
- The Clergy?
- The Wardens?
- Our Worship Experiments?
- Our Building Experiments?
- The Outreach Services?
- The Stewardship Month?
- The Communications:
 - The Service Leaflets?
 - The Weekly Notices?
 - The e-mails?
 - The Website?
- Special Events:
 - The Burns Supper?
 - The Seder Supper?
 - The Open House?
 - The Patronal Picnic?
 - The September Fest?
 - The Fowl Supper?
 - The Christmas Dinner?
 - The Potluck Suppers?
 - The Catered Suppers?
- What are we doing right?
- What are we doing wrong?
- Any suggestions?

*Some Thoughts on the Hub Church
Religious Services in the Cowichan Valley South
(All times are subject to change)*

Denomination	Church Name	Location	Day	Time	Service	Notes
Alliance	Alliance Duncan-N Cowichan	Duncan	Sunday	10:00 AM	Family	250-748-5213
Alliance	Alliance Shawnigan	Shawnigan	Sunday	10:00 AM	Family	250-743-4454
Baptist	Bethel Baptist	Duncan	Sunday	9:15 AM	Family	250-746-7432
Baptist	Bethel Baptist	Duncan	Sunday	10:30 AM	Family	
Gospel	Brae Road Gospel Chapel	Duncan	Sunday	9:15 AM	Remembrance	250-746-5408
Gospel	Brae Road Gospel Chapel	Duncan	Sunday	11:00 AM	Fam Bible Study	
Gospel	Brae Road Gospel Chapel	Duncan	Sunday	6:30 PM	Evening Service	
Gospel	Brae Road Gospel Chapel	Duncan	Wednesday	7:00 PM	Prayer/Bible Study	
Christian Science	Christian Science	Duncan	Sunday	10:30 AM	Family	250-709-3630
Christian Science	Christian Science	Duncan	Wednesday	12:30 PM	Testimony	2nd Wednesday
Christian Science	Christian Science	Duncan	Wednesday	7:00 PM	Testimony	4th Wednesday
Nazarene	Church of the Nazarene	Duncan	Sunday	10:30 AM	Family	250-748-8000
Nazarene	Church of the Nazarene	Duncan	Sunday	7:00 PM	Family	1st and 3rd Sundays
Protestant	City Gate Church	Duncan	Sunday	10:00 AM	Morning Service	250-748-4304
Spiritualist	Cowichan Spiritualist	Duncan	Sunday	11:00 AM	Sunday Service	250-748-0723
Reformed	Duncan Christian Reformed	Duncan	Sunday	10:00 AM	Morning Service	250-748-2122
Reformed	Duncan Christian Reformed	Duncan	Sunday	7:00 PM	Evening Service	
Pentecostal	Duncan Pentecostal	Duncan	Sunday	10:00 AM	Family	250-748-1423
United	Duncan United	Duncan	Sunday	10:00 AM	Morning Service	250-746-6043
United	Duncan United	Duncan	Sunday	7:00 PM	Taize Worship	1st Sunday only
Pentecostal	Lake Cowichan Christian Fellowship	Lake Cowichan	Friday	7:00 PM	Youth	250-701-5722
Pentecostal	Lake Cowichan Christian Fellowship	Lake Cowichan	Sunday	10:00 AM	Family	
Pentecostal	Lake Cowichan Christian Fellowship	Lake Cowichan	Tuesday	7:00 PM	Bible Study	
Baptist	New Life Baptist	Duncan	Sunday	9:00 AM	Family	250-748-6521
Baptist	New Life Baptist	Duncan	Sunday	11:00 AM	Family	
Adventist	Seventh Day Adventist	Duncan	Saturday	9:30 AM	Bible Study	250-748-0110
Adventist	Seventh Day Adventist	Duncan	Saturday	10:30 AM	Family	
Adventist	Seventh Day Adventist	Duncan	Tuesday	7:00 PM	Prayer Fellowship	
Pentecostal	South Cowichan Christian Fellowship	Shawnigan	Saturday	7:00 PM	Youth	250-701-5722
Presbyterian	St Andrews Presbyterian	Duncan	Sunday	9:00 AM	Regular	250-746-7413
Presbyterian	St Andrews Presbyterian	Duncan	Sunday	10:30 AM	Family	
Anglican/Community	St Andrews, Cowichan Station	Cowichan Station	Sunday	10:00 AM	BAS	250-748-8927

Some Thoughts on the Hub Church

Denomination	Church Name	Location	Day	Time	Service	Notes
Anglican/Community	St Andrews, Cowichan Station	Cowichan Station	Wednesday	10:00 AM	BAS	
Roman Catholic	St Ann's	Duncan	Sunday	11:00 AM	Mass	
Roman Catholic	St Clare's Monastery	Duncan	Friday	9:00 AM	Mass	250-748-2232
Roman Catholic	St Clare's Monastery	Duncan	Thursday	9:00 AM	Mass	
Roman Catholic	St Clare's Monastery	Duncan	Wednesday	9:00 AM	Mass	
Roman Catholic	St Edward's	Duncan	Saturday	5:00 PM	Mass	250-746-6831
Roman Catholic	St Edward's	Duncan	Sunday	10:00 AM	Mass	
Roman Catholic	St Edward's	Duncan	Tuesday	7:00 PM	Mass	
Roman Catholic	St Francis	Cobble Hill	Saturday	5:00 PM	Mass	
Roman Catholic	St Francis	Cobble Hill	Sunday	9:00 AM	Mass	
Anglican	St John the Baptist	Cobble Hill	Sunday	8:00 AM	BCP	250-743-3095
Anglican	St John the Baptist	Cobble Hill	Sunday	9:15 AM	BAS	
Anglican	St John the Baptist	Cobble Hill	Sunday	10:00 AM	BAS	
Anglican	St John the Baptist	Cobble Hill	Sunday	11:00 AM	BCP	
Anglican	St John the Baptist	Cobble Hill	Sunday	7:00 PM	Evensong	5th Sundays only
Anglican	St John the Baptist	Duncan	Sunday	9:00 AM	BCP	250-748-9712
Anglican	St John the Baptist	Duncan	Sunday	10:30 AM	BAS	
Anglican	St John the Baptist	Duncan	Wednesday	10:00 AM	BCP	
Anglican	St Peter Quamichan	Duncan	Sunday	8:00 AM	BCP	250-746-6262
Anglican	St Peter Quamichan	Duncan	Sunday	10:00 AM	BAS	
Anglican	St Peter Quamichan	Duncan	Thursday	10:00 AM	BCP	
United	Sylvan United	Mill Bay	Saturday	7:00 PM	Jazz Vespers	4th Saturday
United	Sylvan United	Mill Bay	Sunday	10:00 AM	Morning Service	250-743-4659
Protestant	The Oases Church	Duncan	Friday	6:00 PM	Kids Club	250-746-8457
Protestant	The Oases Church	Duncan	Friday	7:30 PM	Youth	
Protestant	The Oases Church	Duncan	Sunday	10:30 AM	Family	