

St. Georges' Proposal to House Arts Calibre

Commencing September 2022

Over the last few years, the Leadership and Parish Council of St. George's have taken several steps towards fulfilment of our vision, that is to be a Christ-centered, justice seeking community that shares God's love for all people. These steps have included increased Parish participation in community events, outreach to community groups and exploration of viable and ethical ways to address our sad, but undeniably, deteriorating financial position. Not unlike many parishes, the changing demographics of a declining and aging congregation have led to decreased offerings at St Georges and we have begun to experience frequent years where expenses exceed income. To help address this situation, in 2019 Parish Council decided to increase income by renting underutilized spaces to community service groups. One of these renters is Arts Calibre School, a private K-12 school for the performing arts. They entered into an agreement in September 2020 to use some of the Parish spaces for the education of their middle and high school students. This has placed approximately 35 students and teachers in St. Georges' buildings on weekdays over the past year. This current agreement will continue through to June 2022.

In mid-2020 the school and St. Georges started discussing a plan about the provision of long-term housing of the entire school within Parish facilities beginning in September 2022. A Committee was struck by Parish Council to explore how this could occur and to seek Parishioner guidance as to whether this should occur.

In September 2022 the school will require 7 "learning centres" each containing 10-14 students and a teacher. This would place between 90-100 people on our site from 8am to 5PM every weekday. After site inspection and discussion, the Committee identified the following 7 learning centres:

- a. Two centres located in the Narthex (entry space to the church itself)
- b. One on the stage in the Upper Hall
- c. Two in Lower Hall (the Sunday School and youth group space will not be used)
- d. One in the Bayside Room (meeting room in the Parish office wing)
- e. One additional centre in the Office wing; exact location dependent on construction requirements. The Rector and Parish Administrator would still have their own offices in the wing, but the exact location and/or size of those offices may change.

It must be emphasized that should the Parish approve this proposal the Sanctuary space will not be used by the school and will be available to parishioners at all times. As well, all the spaces used by the school will still belong to the Parish and be available for use after school hours and on the weekends, e.g., Bayside Room for meetings, Upper Hall by both our youth groups and other renters, and Lower Hall for Parish functions. Further, Arts Calibre recognizes that this approval of the housing of the school for a period of 2-3 years does not imply approval of the longer-term housing. Both parties agree that this would be a trial period before pursuing a long-term tenancy.

Arts Calibre agreed to these following conditions on 12 May:

- a. to share the cost of any necessary construction modifications with the Parish.

- b. that the cost of any room dividers or curtains necessary to delineate learning centres in the Narthex and Lower Hall will be their responsibility.
- c. that such items will be removed when necessary, to enable utilization of the space for worship and other necessary Parish functions

In the opinion of the Committee and Parish Council Arts Calibre will contribute activity and enthusiasm to our Parish. They are interested in participating in our services and other activities. For example, they had planned to coordinate a Carol Sing at Christmas, but Covid realities intervened. As well, they have expressed interest in providing occasional music for Sunday morning services, providing concerts for their families, the Parish and the wider community, assisting with our Christmas Fair and helping with any future pantomime productions. They are a community-minded and active school and are eager to become a contributing part of the St. Georges community.

Before her resignation Rev. Elizabeth Barnard and Leadership viewed this project as consistent with the Parish's vision and mission to demonstrate God's love to the wider community. The school's presence would demonstrate this community involvement, something consistent with our new Bishop's vision of the role of the Diocese and its Parishes. Further, the increased revenue potentially realized by this project would not only offset the noted decline in offerings, it could also enable St. Georges to significantly shift its volunteer effort from being focused on fund-raising to being more involved in the community.

It is acknowledged that proceeding with this project will introduce significant change in St. Georges, and that change does not always come easy. This change will introduce some issues that we will have to deal with; issues like increased traffic and noise, increased wear and tear of our infrastructure, and adjusting to new schedules and site availability. To help anticipate and alleviate these issues, we have spoken with other local Parishes who have also entered into a significant space-sharing arrangement with a community group. This includes St. Marys' relationship with the College of Performing Arts and St. John the Divine with Pacific Opera Victoria. They have both indicated that while bumps in the road can and do occur, they both believe the relationship has been beneficial to their respective Parishes. They have shared information that we believe will help us learn from their best practices should we decide to proceed with this project.

Leadership and Parish Council believe that the positives of this project greatly outweigh potential issues. Yes, it is undeniable that the money that could be realized by this project (between \$70-80K per year) is attractive, but the opportunity for making a real contribution to the education of our community's children and youth, and the opportunity for increased Parish work in the community made possible by this endeavour are more important and are the main reasons Leadership and Parish Council seek your approval to go ahead.

The next steps are to seek Parish feedback on this project and then to vote at a Special General Meeting on whether or not we should proceed. Tentative dates over the coming weeks include:

- feedback at the "coffee times" after the 8 and 10am services on 13 June
- evening feedback sessions at 7PM on Monday 21 June and Thursday 24 June. We anticipate one of these sessions will include Arts Calibre representatives
- Special General Meeting and vote after 10am service on Sunday 11 July.

FAQ – ARTS CALIBRE SCHOOL – *updated June 11, 2021

How will Arts Calibre (AC) affect the congregation's use of the church facilities? Arts Calibre would be onsite Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm. They will be using all our facilities except for the church sanctuary and surrounding rooms: they would not use the chapel, choir area, loft & loft office. They would be using the Narthex & washrooms as well as portions of the church office wing & hall. This will mean that some groups who meet during the day will need to change their meeting location and/or time. One possibility is for the church to rent some of the meeting spaces at The Orchard.

How will AC impact our ability to host spring/Christmas fairs? Usually fairs are held on Saturdays, but we do usually have prep during the week before an event. An option is for us to add dates into the new contract with AC to ensure that we have the facilities when we need them for particular dates. Some prep could occur on evenings and weekends leading up to these events.

Will we still be able to hold funerals with limited notice? Yes, AC is aware that we may have to hold a funeral at any time. They were used to making alternative off site arrangements at their past rental facility at Gordon Head United Church. It may mean that we will need to hold the receptions in the Narthex rather than the Lower Hall so that AC only needs to move their classrooms in the Narthex.

Will any other rental groups be impacted by this new contract with AC?

EPIC, the nature-based school who currently rents from us 2-3 days a week for a few hours a day in the Lower Hall, would be the only rental group who would be affected. We are still in discussion with Arts Calibre to see if we can find a way to accommodate EPIC. Our other rentals, Victoria Children's Choir and Irish Dance, will not be affected.

How will this arrangement affect our youth groups?

The current Sunday School section of the Lower Hall will be off limits to our rental groups. This will be reserved for our Sunday School, Youth Group, and Young Adults group. The Upper Hall gym will also be available in the evenings for these groups to use.

What changes are we proposing to the Admin office area of the Hall building?

In order to create enough learning spaces for AC, we have proposed adding two learning spaces in the Admin wing of the hall building (near the church office). This would mean rearranging the current rooms and offices to accommodate this. This may involve moving some walls to make better use of the space for both the church office staff and AC.

What positive experiences have other churches had with large rentals?

St. John the Divine's partnership with Pacific Opera Society has been greatly beneficial to St. John's due to the income generated and in keeping the hall maintained to a very high standard which St. John's could not afford to do on its own.

St. Mary's (Oak Bay) partnership with Victoria College of Performing Arts the congregation sees themselves as 'grandparents' of the students. The college started offering choral scholarships to some students to sing in their choir on Sundays, and also include students/teachers a few times a year when they have parish lunch events, such as after Remembrance Day service, First Sunday of Advent, etc.

What are some best practices that have been shared by St. Johns and St. Mary's?

- St. Mary's recommends everything needs to be in writing and clearly understood by both sides (church and rental group): eg when something breaks or needs replacing who is responsible to fixing or replacing, how much of the utilities is their share etc.
- St. Mary's noted the parish should decide whether to approach this arrangement 'mentally' as a family partnership with the school, or as a simple landlord/tenant situation. Both require clear documentation/lease agreement to protect both parties, but the essence of the relationship will be different, depending on how you approach it as a parish.
- St. John's started by getting a commercial appraisal of what they could charge for the space based on similar facilities in town. They also worked closely with the Diocesan Asset Manager, Peter Daniels at that time, and had the lease reviewed by a lawyer prior to signing.

How may it affect the wider community?

There will be an increase in noise and traffic in the neighbourhood and onsite at St. George's which will impact The Orchard as well as our neighbours in the area.

Is our church property zoned to host a school?

Yes, as per the District of Saanich.

Will there be someone on site while the school is in session?

There is discussion of hiring a maintenance manager that could take care of issues that arise such as clogged toilets, etc. This could be a shared cost with another parish in the area.

Do our bathrooms meet the requirements of the school?

Yes, they meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education.

What happens after the trial period? (see next page)

There are several possibilities. Should both the Parish and Arts Calibre determine that continued partnership is to their mutual benefit, then discussion would begin with the Diocese on legally establishing a long-term lease arrangement. Such a relationship may require modification and renovation of our buildings to ensure that sufficient functional space is available for both church and school use. How this could happen, and whether it should, will be evaluated and discussed by both parties during the trial period. Conversely, either party could decide that the relationship is not beneficial to them and the school would move elsewhere at the end of the trial period.

***Does the vote on this proposal require a simple majority to pass?**

No. Leadership has decided that a minimum of 2/3 of the Parishioners attending the Special General Meeting (currently planned for Sunday 11 July) must vote in favor of the proposal for it to proceed.

***I'm not happy with the idea of moving the Parish Administrator's office. Does this have to happen?**

To create sufficient Learning Spaces for Arts Calibre some existing rooms or offices will need to be modified and/or moved. In the non-expert opinion of the Committee established by Parish Council to provide initial exploration of the proposal the simplest and least expensive option included moving the Parish Administrator's office to a different location in the Office wing and a reduction in the size of the Rector's Office. However, it must be remembered that this is the opinion of a group of people with no experience in construction and office design. The actual modifications will be decided by consideration of the recommendation of construction experts and impact on Parish function and "feel". This doesn't necessarily mean that the Parish Administrator's office won't be moved. Nor does it mean that all will be satisfied with the final decision.

***It seems likely that scheduling difficulties will occur between Parish events (funerals, weddings, fundraisers, etc.). How will this be handled?**

Yes, there will be times where a planned or unexpected Parish event conflicts with a school operation or a previously planned school event. And the opposite will also occur; an unexpected school requirement (regulatory inspection, for example) could conflict with a previously scheduled Parish event. As stated above in an earlier question, the school does have access to an offsite facility. This facility can be used by the school to accommodate planned, and to some extent, unexpected Parish events. But it is recognized by both the Parish and the school that scheduling issues will arise. We intend to establish a joint Parish-School committee that will meet regularly to discuss and find solutions to scheduling problems and other issues that will undoubtedly arise. One of the main functions of this committee will be to maintain awareness of each other's schedule to maintain awareness of significant events and enable joint planning to avoid conflict.

***The finances situation at St. Georges seems fine. Do we really “need” the money?**

While the financial situation of St. Georges is thankfully better than most Parishes, it is still deteriorating. In the years from 2015 to 2020 inclusive, offerings (our primary source of income, by a wide margin) declined by 10%, or a drop of approximately \$30,000. This has resulted in the Parish running a deficit for 3 of those 6 years. It is true that the Parish experienced a surplus in 2020, but this was due to 3 unique “events”: reception of ~\$17,000 in federal Covid relief funding, reception of ~\$9000 from allowing our facility to be backdrop for a movie, and significantly lower expenses due to closures resulting from the Covid pandemic. This year (2021) our budget is planning for a break-even year. But it needs to be pointed out that this is a reflection of the fact that the budget plans for a 50% Rector salary for 9 months and reduced expenses due to the continuing pandemic.