

2011

JNAC

REPORT

SILVER SPIRE UNITED CHURCH
366 St. Paul St.
ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO L2R 3N2

Community Profile

St. Catharines is part of the Regional Municipality of Niagara. The Region is bordered by the city of Hamilton to the west and the United States to the east. The total area of the Region is 1,851 square kilometers (715 square miles), and St. Catharines makes up just over 5% of the total area at 99 square kilometers (38 square miles). It is the largest municipality in the Niagara Region, with a population of 132,000. It is situated 111 kilometres (70 miles) from Toronto, 19 kilometres (12 miles) from Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake, and 19 kilometres (12 miles) from Niagara Falls. All these cities are popular tourist destinations.

Situated near the end of St. Paul Street, in the heart of downtown St. Catharines, Silver Spire United Church is surrounded by an eclectic array of specialty shops, ethnic and contemporary restaurants, cafes, clubs, and the local farmers' market. The neighbourhood also contains office buildings and urban residences (including several seniors' residences), a fire hall, courthouse, library, and several government addiction centres and social service organizations. Silver Spire is a stone's throw away from the local bus terminal that not only has local service every half hour, but offers transportation to and from major city centres such as Toronto. The Municipality has recently completed the planning stage of a new downtown arts centre that will include several theatres and an off-site campus for Brock University's theatre and arts programs, set to open in approximately 2013.

The downtown also has many empty stores, and has deteriorated over the years. The issues of poverty and homelessness are at the front door of Silver Spire. However, the creation of the arts centre and the opening of new businesses offer hope that this part of our city will be revitalized. The City of St. Catharines is also the location of a new hospital which is under construction, scheduled to be open in 2013. This 375-bed hospital will replace the aging St. Catharines General and old Hotel Dieu sites, and will include a regional centre for cancer treatment. Although the new hospital is not located in the downtown, it will improve the quality of life for residents of the city and beyond.

Brock University is located in St. Catharines, and the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus of Niagara College is just outside the boundary of St. Catharines. Together these schools draw nearly 23,000 full-time and 15,000 part-time students. According to the 2006 census, the two most common age groups for residents in the area immediately surrounding Silver Spire are 15-24 years, likely due to the student presence, and 45-59 years of age. As a whole, the City of St. Catharines has the highest proportion of seniors aged 65 and over of all metropolitan areas in Canada.

For further information, please visit the City of St. Catharines website at www.stcatharines.ca and the Regional Niagara website at www.niagararegion.ca.

Pastoral Charge Profile

Silver Spire United Church came into being through the vision of three downtown St. Catharines congregations (Memorial United, St. Paul Street United, and Welland Avenue United) and by the action of Niagara Presbytery on July 1, 2008 as an amalgamated pastoral charge located at the former St. Paul Street United building. The creation of a new identity for this new pastoral charge is an ongoing process as we worship, learn, dream, work, and celebrate together.

As part of the process of defining who we are as a congregation, we have adopted mission and vision statements and identified a set of core values:

Mission statement: Learning, Living, Loving

Vision Statement: Creating a community, centred in Christ, that welcomes, comforts and transforms

Core Values: We are committed to:

- all age groups
- being Christ-centered
- compassion
- hospitality
- learning
- openness and acceptance
- reverence
- stewardship

Silver Spire is a destination church. Our members live scattered throughout St. Catharines and the rest of the Niagara Region. We are also a downtown church, developing programs that express our mission, vision, and values in tangible ways. One such program is our Morning Prayer ministry. This was first established as a weekday morning time of prayer and preparation during Advent in 2008. The marginalized among our neighbours began attending and found it to be a safe and welcoming place where those attending would learn their name. Morning Prayer was so well-received by the congregation and by the surrounding community that it has continued. The 30-minute service is lay-led, and is followed by a gathering for refreshments and conversation.

In the summer we open our doors and bring the church community outside on our front lawn, thereby inviting those passing by to join us at tables for refreshments, conversation, music, and the creation of original art. Le Café is open on Sunday mornings before, during and after the regular worship service. During the winter Silver Spire along with six other downtown churches participates in Out of the Cold. One night a week Silver Spire provides a hot meal to over 100 people and overnight shelter as well as showers and laundry facilities.

The congregation of Silver Spire is a mixed one in various ways, including age, socioeconomic level, education, and theological outlook. Our differences, however, do not prevent us from enjoying a warm, open, family-like atmosphere. We have an inclusive marriage policy. While there is a variety of theological views among the congregation, many of us are interested in exploring new directions in theology. There are numerous opportunities for education and spiritual development: Morning Prayer, an annual Week of Guided Prayer, a Wellness Centre, a dream group, and study groups that engage with such current theologians as Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, and John Shelby Spong.

Music is integral to our worship. Our music directors and ministers work as a team to make worship a visual and auditory experience that engages both the head and the heart. They are supported by three choirs (adult, children, and bell), instrumentalists from the congregation, a congregation that loves to sing, and a pair of technicians at the AV console. Our music ministry is more than Sunday morning worship: it includes Morning Prayer and musical events such as special seasonal concerts that invite in the community as contributors and listeners.

Our membership numbers are not as accurate as we would like, but we find that it takes more than two years in an amalgamated congregation to truly determine the membership. The roll currently comprises about 550 people. There are in addition numerous adherents, but their numbers are more difficult to track. Attendance at Sunday morning services averages about 175. Approximately 27% of the adults in the congregation are 80 years old or older, 20% are between 70 and 79, 21% are between 60 and 69, and 30% are between 40 and 59. On a typical Sunday anywhere from 10 to 20 children will attend Sunday School; approximately 30 children are registered with the Sunday School this year, of whom about 20 attend reasonably regularly. A confirmation class for youth is taking place in the spring of 2011, though otherwise the youth group has no active program.

In 2010, 311 families contributed financially to the church. Of this number, 79 are on PAR. Not surprisingly, among all those who give, the top few give the most: about 30% of donor units gave over 71% of the total, averaging \$1,992 each in 2010. The remaining 70% of givers averaged \$329 each, but another 112 potential donors gave nothing.

Total givings in 2010 were about 20% less than they were in 2009. Our membership numbers have declined as well: on January 1, 2009 Silver Spire had 616 members on the roll, but on January 1, 2010 there were 566 members. Our weekly attendance in the half of 2008 in which we existed averaged 250, compared to the present figure of around 175. This is partly due to deaths, partly due to members who joined at amalgamation not continuing with the new church, and partly due to conflict that arose within the congregation during 2009.

The 2010 Stewardship Campaign was a 5-week program in the spring, which culminated on Celebration Sunday when the Celebrate Stewardship Committee

invited everyone to fill out an Estimate of Givings Card for 2010. Despite a successful campaign, we are currently running a deficit budget.

Resources Profile

The 2010 Annual Report (q.v.) provides the details of the Silver Spire operating budget for 2010 and 2011 as well as the actual income and expenses for 2010, and an accounting of the funds administered by the Trustees.

Silver Spire comprises a 25,421 square foot building located on a 98.6' x 255.4' property. This includes the sanctuary, office building (a former apartment building which houses the existing offices, library, and Sunday School rooms) and back building (which includes the hall, kitchen, Hearth Room, and gymnasium). There is no manse.

Building maintenance and repair is the responsibility of the Property Team, who conduct quarterly site inspections, obtain quotes, schedule regular maintenance, make emergency repairs, establish a detailed preventative maintenance program and provide reports to Council.

We are stewards of a very busy building which houses the Learning Disabilities Centre, the Breast Cancer Institute, and the Niagara Presbytery Resource Centre, as well as groups such as badminton, carpet bowling, weight management and yoga. In our sanctuary Ryson United Music Studio holds performances, Suzuki School offers music lessons, and the Kiwanis Music Festival takes place. Other community groups using our facilities include a transgender group, the Victorian Order of Nurses Foot Clinic, a suicide support group, AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen. Workshops are offered for mothers and infants, for the seeing impaired, and those wishing to manage their anger. Our own groups, including Morning Prayer, United Church Women units, quilters, and various study groups meet and develop friendships within these walls. We have set aside a room for the Wellness Centre, a space for our own practitioners of Reiki and spiritual direction.

Many volunteers share their time and their gifts to support the various activities of the Pastoral Charge. This includes participation in programs such as Le Café, Sundaes Nights, the Week of Personal Reflection, Morning Prayer, the Silver Bells Bazaar, Friendship Dinners, the annual rummage sale, the Winter Fantasy Ball, and many other programs and events.

Silver Spire's Church Council consists of two Co-Chairs, a Secretary, the Pastoral Charge's ministers, and representatives from the ministry clusters: Administration (comprising the Property and Finance teams), Care (Outreach, Pastoral Care, and Social Teams), Spiritual Nurturing (Worship, Christian Nurture, Youth, and Choir), and Human Resources (Membership, Stewardship, and Communication). Also included on Council are representatives of the Ministry and Personnel Committee, the UCW, the Board of Trustees, and Presbytery.

The staff of the Pastoral Charge is currently as follows:

- One **full-time Ordained Minister**, on appointment until June 2011
- One **part-time Ordained Minister**, on appointment until June 2011, responsible for Pastoral Care and Christian Education
- **Director of Music** (contract); we have a husband and wife team filling this position
- **Office Administrator** (part-time, 20 hours per week); duties include recording of congregational givings
- **Communications Administrator** (contract; part-time, 12 hours per week); this is a new position which is still evolving
- **Bookkeeper** (contract; part-time): responsible for disbursements; overseen by the Finance Team
- **Custodians** (1 full-time day, 1 half-time evenings)

Position Profile

We recommend 2 full-time ministry personnel equivalents (FTE). Their work should focus on the key areas of worship leadership, including preaching; teaching and Christian nurturing; pastoral care; and outreach and social justice activism.

- At least 1 FTE is to be an ordained minister of the United Church of Canada, ordered for word, sacrament, and pastoral care
- .5 FTE to focus on pastoral care
- .5 FTE to focus on Christian Development for all ages

The duties described in the position descriptions may be allocated among the members of the team ministry according to the members' respective skills, abilities, and interests, to the mutual satisfaction of the Joint Search Committee and the applicants.

In order to help the pastoral charge continue to heal and grow and to actively pursue its mission and core values, we seek ministry personnel who will provide strong, visionary leadership and who have the ability to facilitate and demonstrate teamwork among themselves as well as teamwork among the ministry personnel, the staff, the lay leadership, and the members of the pastoral charge in all areas of ministry. We require ministry personnel who will facilitate and encourage cooperation and effective communication among the various groups in the pastoral charge.

We seek ministry personnel with particular strength in planning and leading dynamic, meaningful, and inspiring worship services, and who will support the music ministry of the pastoral charge.

We seek strong leadership in spiritual development and nurturing; we expect ministry personnel to develop and coordinate opportunities and programs that promote spiritual exploration and faith formation, growth and practice for all ages.

We seek support and encouragement in being inclusive of all persons, and we require commitment to Silver Spire's equal marriage policy. We seek those who will actively work with other members of the faith community in St. Catharines.

We seek support for the current outreach ministries of the pastoral charge, and assistance in further developing and coordinating social justice outreach activities serving the local and wider communities (for example, Start Me Up Niagara).

We seek ministry personnel who will provide pastoral care on a continuing basis, conducting visits to members unable to attend worship and to those in hospital. We expect that support and guidance will be provided to the existing Pastoral Care Team. We expect that pastoral care for those in crisis be provided, and that any

ordained member of the ministry personnel team be able and willing to participate in this.

We seek ministry personnel with administrative skills, who will provide oversight and leadership for the newly-adopted governance model of the pastoral charge. We expect regular meetings among the ministry personnel and the support staff, and oversight to the administrative needs of the pastoral charge. We seek those who will take a leadership role in stewardship development, and who will maintain an active relationship with Niagara Presbytery, Hamilton Conference, and the wider church.

We seek ministry personnel who are adaptable and flexible, encouraging new ideas; who are approachable, caring and compassionate; who have excellent communication skills, and the ability to foster open communication; and who are able to help the Pastoral Charge to find its vision and actively pursue it.

We seek ministry personnel who will both challenge and comfort us, and who will encourage, engage, and inspire us.

Available upon request:

- *2010 Annual Report*
- *Constitution*

Terms Profile

The Pastoral Charge approved a budget which allows us to pay competitively according to the Salary and Benefits Schedule of the United Church of Canada up to Category F, and is prepared to negotiate above the prescribed minimum depending on the candidate's experience and gifts. Actual compensation, including salary, housing allowance, continuing education, book allowances, and sabbatical leave will be negotiated at the appropriate time.

Recommendations:

To change the terms of the existing pastoral relationships, in order to request that Niagara Presbytery declare vacancies for 2 full-time equivalents at Silver Spire Pastoral Charge, including at least one FTE who is an Ordained Minister of the United Church.

To request Niagara Presbytery to form a Joint Search Committee.

To request Niagara Presbytery to disband the Joint Needs Assessment Committee.