

THE CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE DIVINE  
CHURCH BUILDING DEVELOPMENT GROUP  
SUMMARY OF FINAL REPORT 2016



From Beatus's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*. The Apocalypse is the last book of the New Testament known as "The Revelation of St. John the Divine". The title of this illustration is "The New Jerusalem" created in 1047

## Introduction

In 2014, the Church Building Development Group was tasked with exploring possible changes to the church building and the basement, in light of the evolution of the mission, worship and functions of the Parish. The remit did not include the Parish House, nor the extended property around the church (referred to as the “Precinct” in the final report).

The intention was to provide a cohesive vision and plan for the longer term development of the church building as it serves the ongoing life of the church community.

The group started by touring the church buildings, noting how the various parts of the church are currently used, and a with focus on identifying problems and inadequacies, and possible future uses of the building spaces.

The Group then conducted consultations with several individuals and groups involved with various aspects of church life. From the observations of the Group, and from the tours and consultations many issues and opportunities were revealed.

A repeat series of sessions of “Re-pitching the Tent” were conducted loosely based on the book of the same name by Richard Giles. (The first series had been conducted in 2012/2013 with a similar objective in mind). Both these series were intended to offer an opportunity for members of the congregation to participate in the generation of ideas and possibilities for future development of the church building.

Basic design drawings were developed to address the ideas that arose from all the consultations, and in particular to test the feasibility of potential alterations and additions to the building.

The following areas of concern became evident:

<b>Access</b>	Access and accessibility to and within all parts of the church building
<b>Space</b>	Use of rooms and spaces within the church building. The need for more accessible, flexible meeting spaces, some large enough for post-service gatherings and other activities.
<b>Facilities</b>	Physical support facilities within the church building e.g. lighting. sound, more and better washrooms (non-gendered), coffee and refreshment services.

The focus falls on four areas in the building that need attention:

- the basement
- the church worship space
- the entrances
- the connections to the Parish House.

The Group then was able to offer some recommendations arising from the observations, and drawings, but with the proviso that the whole context of any plans for the development of the “Precinct” and Parish House also be taken into account.

The recommendations included:

**Sound System.** This needs to be easy to run and efficient. It does not include the headphone system. There is a need to ensure that when using more than one head microphone the system is still easy to balance.

**Lighting.** This is a high priority item. Replacement can be carried out in two phases; first, general lighting over all the area of the church; secondly, performance lighting for liturgical use as well as concerts, exhibitions etc

**Chapel refurbishing.** The removal of pews and provision of chairs would allow immediate flexibility of use of this space. The existing folding screen door is outworn and inadequate and needs to be replaced. Glass doors would be preferable.

**Accessibility.** The Basement amelioration is of high importance for accessibility reasons. The introduction of ramps and elevator would greatly improve the safer operations of the Food Bank and Out-of-the Rain shelter. A Class H elevator would allow use for everyone of the basement hall for many church events such as meetings, coffee service and catering for funerals and weddings etc. Accessible toilets would be essential as part of the changes.

**Basement improvements.** The basement as it is presently is not a pleasant environment. A new kitchen, better washrooms, more useable storage and meeting areas are all desperately needed.

**Chairs.** The replacement of pews with chairs would allow for immediate flexibility of use in the nave. Care would need to be taken to acknowledge the donors who have their names on pews. The Chapel could be the first area for replacement of pews with chairs, and used as a test case.

**The extension of a permanent platform** from the chancel into the first bay of the Nave would provide greater integration of liturgical and congregational spaces within the church, safer access for all at the Eucharist, and a better performance area.

**The levelling of the floor** should accompany the change from pews to chairs. In the centre three bays of the church nave the concrete floor slopes 10 inches from East to West. A level floor would reduce the need for steps to the Chancel to one 5 inch step only.

**Altar and Communion Table.** At present communion is prepared at a small inconvenient table beneath the Chancel arch, and the communicants have to pass this table to receive the bread and wine at the rail of the "high" altar. This presents a dichotomy that seems to make the "high" altar redundant.

**Reredos** could be moved forward, and re-erected as a free standing screen behind the choir. This will provide spaces for other uses behind the screen. The rebuilt reredos/ screen should stand at the main chancel floor level so as to maintain site-lines to the East Window from the Nave seating. Moving the reredos and extending the chancel floor would provide space for a larger altar/communion table and could accommodate rails for kneeling around the extension.

**Columbarium.** Considering this facility is meant to be a memorial to the deceased individuals it's physical environment is poor. Ventilation is non-existent and it's appearance is ramshackle. The Memorial Garden would seem to be a more appropriate

resting place for the remains, and would allow easy access for visiting family and friends. Internment in the ground could be offered or a Columbarium wall could be built.

**Washrooms.** Accessible non-gendered washrooms are part of the plan for the re-furbishment of the basement. Also two washrooms are proposed for the Parish House corridor area. The latter would be accessible from the main floor of the church.

**Chancel re-furbishment.** Remove carpet from Chancel for acoustic reasons. Choir stalls could be replaced with chairs for more flexibility of use.

**Loft above Organ Console.** The existing tiered floor needs to be levelled for safe access and to provide space for music storage. Better lighting is needed also for the staircase to the loft.

**Parish House Corridor.** Movement along this important link is difficult. It would be advisable to straighten and widen the route. In doing so the sacristy would have to be relocated but the other facilities would be improved, such as the provision of a second washroom (See above).

**Sacristy.** When the Parish House Corridor is straightened and widened, the sacristy can be re-located to the area behind the re-positioned reredos/screen.

**Entrances.** The **garden entrance** has become de facto the main point of access to the church for most people due to its proximity to the car park and the inaccessibility of the entrances on Quadra Street. To more clearly indicate the route to the Garden Entrance a portion of concrete block wall to the north of the church tower to be removed (as far as the existing metal gate), and an area of hard paving laid extending back from the sidewalk.

The existing doors need to be automated for disabled access from existing ramps.

Since both North and South porches are essential escape routes, they should be cleared of all unnecessary furnishings and stored rostra.

Glass doors to the Nave in both North and South porches would make the church more visible when outer doors are open.

#### **A Garden Entrance Extension.**

***This is the preferred alternative solution to improve the entrances to the church and basement.***

A new extension at the garden entrance to be built alongside the exterior of the North aisle. Roof lights would allow daylight illumination of stained glass windows in North aisle. The existing staircase within the present garden entrance to be removed. A Class H elevator to be installed in northwest corner of the present garden entrance area. The new extension will include a space to be used as a “welcome lobby”, and a new staircase built to basement that would meet current building code.

**Please Note:**

The recommendations could be implemented in stages, with careful attention to the sequence of some of the changes as addressed in the report.

The Report does not offer any idea of cost estimates. In order to collect even initial budget estimates with any validity at all, it would be necessary first to consult with many specialists, including city building control officers and contractors, and to prepare construction drawings and specifications for their use.

There may be some funding sources that can be further investigated, particularly where accessibility is of concern, when the initial projects are contemplated.

The Church Building Development Group consisted of the following individuals:

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The Group also wishes to acknowledge the contributions of **everyone** that played a part. This of course includes all those who participated in both series of the "Re-Pitching the Tent" and readily offered their observations and creative ideas.

The Group also wishes to thank the following individuals in particular who put in much time and effort over the year:

Craig Hiebert who played a lead role in offering the "Re-Pitching the Tent" for a second time, with Tony and Larry.

Rand Harrison, member of the Property Committee.

Ted Butler and all the folk involved with making and serving coffee.

Karyn Lehman and all involved in "Out of the Rain".

Peggy Wilmot and members of the Food Bank crew.

