

Can We Grow? Yes!!

Last February, a number of St. Paul's people attended a one-day conference at St. Peter's church in Ville Mont Royal. This event hosted 17 churches from the Montreal Diocese and was entitled, "Can a Church Grow in Montreal? Yes!"

What a great day it was with presentations on Worship, Music, Children and Youth, and Community and Mission. We were given many examples and heard many ideas as to how we could make changes and create a new vision for our church community. Of course there were things that St. Peter's have had success with that would not work effectively in our area due to the difference in our demographics (population, linguistics, cultural etc.).

One of the phrases that was shared and stuck with me was that we, as a church, have to be "willing to change significantly". In our services, we need to mix formality with informality. Also, to encourage lots of participation by all parishioners, not just the "chosen few". One of the most important things is to find a way to reach the 'un-churched' visitor. Newcomers have to be made to feel welcome by introducing ourselves, inviting them to take a seat and showing them the service books we'll be using that day. We already allow for a mix of traditional and contemporary music but why can't we ask around to see if there is any hidden musical talent sitting at the back of the church?

The children are SO important to the future of our church. Taking note of their suggestions and acting upon them if it works for us- gather outside on the lawn if the weather is good. Have a sleep-over on Saturday night so they are there for the early morning service (and their leaders can get home early and hit their beds!)

As you can probably gather from this, I was eager and willing to listen and learn from the St. Peter's people. They had so much to share with us. It is always difficult to adapt to change but in order to **grow our church**, we must be willing to grow ourselves. Everyone should get involved because it takes more than a handful of people. Another thing that was clearly stated at the conference and that we all tend to forget at times, **"Ask God for the things we need and don't think that anything is too outrageous!"**

Come autumn, we can begin to gather ideas and find some new direction so that we, too, "can make our church grow" - in Greenfield Park. I hope and pray that you all have a safe and restful summer season.

Jennifer Taylor, Pastor's Warden