

# PARISH HOUSE

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Newmarket Church of Christ

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## A PLACE

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Nathan Pickard

Twenty years ago I sat in the basement of the Newmarket Church of Christ. Most of the church was present as this gathering was for the church to ask questions of myself and an opportunity for me to ask the gathered church questions. It felt like a first date where we were testing the waters of a possible relationship.

I don't remember all the questions I was asked, but I do remember one question I asked of the gathered church: *What do you hope to be?*

# Wanted . . .



## Parish House Minister

The Newmarket Church of Christ has intentionally lived with her neighbours for the past 15+ years. We are now looking for a Parish House minister who will (but not limited to):

- Build upon and strengthen the established ministries and friendships within the neighbourhood,
- Live with and for our neighbours
- Continue to help us live deeper into the mission of God

Those interested to apply and/or to seek more information, please contact [newmarketcofc@gmail.com](mailto:newmarketcofc@gmail.com).

A full job description can be found at:  
<https://www.newmarketchurchofchrist.ca/parish-house>

## A Survey of Ontario Churches of Christ

In the summer of 2024, a survey was conducted of Churches of Christ within Ontario. The survey attempted to measure current data, trends and realities of Ontario Churches of Christ. The completed survey provides us reasons to be both optimistic and also very worried about our future.

- Since 2011, a 1/3 of our churches have closed their doors. In 2011 the projected number of congregations within Ontario was 73 where as 2024 the number of congregations was 52.
- Since 2011, a 1/3 of our membership can no longer be counted as “members.” In 2011 the projected number of members was 3127 where as in 2024 the projected number of members is 2100.

What has happened whereby a 1/3 of our churches have closed their doors and a 1/3 of our membership has disappeared? Are their societal shifts that are making it difficult to be people of Christian faith? Are there demographic realities that we need to be aware of?

Part of the survey includes proposed questions we as a movement need to wrestle with as we face a decline. One question, that I hope remains at the front of our conversations, “*What is God up to in our midst?*”

To view the report of Ontario Churches of Christ, [click here](#).

## A Place, Cont'd

One answer still stands out, *"I hope we can be a light up on a hill ."* Fast forward twenty years. I was sitting outside on a patio talking with various people who were walking in and out of what we call, 280 Davis. Tammy was sitting beside me and she was introducing me to various people. *"This is Nathan. He's a pastor at the church up the street."* Some people didn't care who or what I was. But there was one person.

*"Is that the small little church just up the street?"*

*"Yes."*

*"I know that church. It's the church that feeds those of us are hungry."*

Since that experience, I've thought about what others might say about our Christian faith community. Here's what I think others might say.

*"It's the church that buries our friends and family who die in tragic circumstances."*

*"It's the church that is working to set the captives free."*

*"It's the church that cares deeply for the children of the neighbourhood."*

In the book of Joshua there is a story of when God's people crossed the Jordan River. At the crossing, Joshua and others set up twelve stones as a reminder of what had happened in that place. As the author of Joshua writes,

When your children ask their parents in time to come, 'What do these stones mean?' Then tell them, 'Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.'

Joshua 4:21-22

We experience God in places. My friend Terry talks about his experience of meeting God at a revival meeting in a large auditorium. Susan talks about her experience of God in a small little church. Joel tells the story of watching children experience God at a summer camp.



When we read the stories of the gospels, people experience God in a variety of places. Sometimes it happens in the temple or a synagogue. Other times it happens along a dusty road, around a shared table, on a mountain or in a small little fishing village. The gospel stories paint a picture of experiencing Jesus in a variety of places.

I can't help but wonder where people will experience God today.

Every Monday a few of us gather, via zoom, and we read Luke 10:1-12. In our most recent gathering Scott prayed that just as the wise men were surprised to have an experience of God, that we to might be surprised at how God suddenly shows up in our midst. As Scott finished his prayer, I couldn't stop thinking about the wise men (and let's include the shepherds as well). Their everyday lives were intruded and interrupted by God's sudden appearance in their midst. I can't help but wonder in what ways our lives will be interrupted and intruded upon because God is present in our midst. And if by chance we do have an

experience where our lives are interrupted by God, will this experience change us? Will it change how we live? Will it change how we behave? Will it change our ethics?

In the early 1960s, there were a group of people whose lives were deeply affected by God's actions in this world. As a result, they built a small little brown building where people could gather for worship. But it's more than just a place of worship. It's a place where the neighbourhood recognizes something hopeful takes place; it's a place where the neighbourhood recognizes the hungry can be fed, the outcast welcomed, the broken can be healed, the orphans can be protected, and where walls of division are broken down.

When twelve stones were set up and future generations asked, "*What do these mean?*" A story was told; a story of crossing the Jordan River. We have a small little brown building tucked into the midst of eight high rise apartment and condo buildings. I hope as people pass this little brown building and ask, "*What is that place?*" That the collective response of the neighbourhood will be to tell a story--to tell a story of God's redemptive work in this world and in this neighbourhood.



For several years we've been invested in helping our neighbours through the Christmas season. Once again, with the help and leadership of many individuals (and not necessarily members of our congregation), we provided a shopping day, winter clothing items, Christmas gifts, turkey's and just as important, a welcoming community. Grateful for everyone who is involved in helping to serve our neighbours.

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"To be most effective in bringing about change in a community or a neighborhood, it helps if you live there."

Larry James, *The Wealth of the poor*

**NEWMARKET  
CHURCH OF  
CHRIST**

Sharing the kingdom of  
God through friendship  
with the neighbourhood

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