

8. Etobicoke Centre

Community

The Electoral District of Etobicoke Centre in which the both Christ the King (Islington) and St. Wilfrid's are located, is predominantly Christian. Of the population of 111,790 there are 30,745 Protestants, 48,730 Roman Catholics and some 9195 who espouse other denominations. Given the community's proximity to the airport, and its recently developing role as a Refugee center, it is not surprising to find 6,200 Muslims and 2,500 Hindus have taken up residence there. Some 11,860 people declared they have no religious affiliation.

St Wilfrid's

Demographic information in chart and tabular form is found at Annex C.

St Wilfrid's is located on Kipling Avenue, between Eglinton and Rathburn Rd., in a middle to upper middle class neighbourhood. The parish is in the middle of the City of Toronto Community of Princess-Rosethorn. The community has fewer immigrants and aboriginals than the Toronto average.

The housing mix in Princess-Rosethorn is predominantly – 85 percent – single family detached homes with approximately 11 percent high rise apartments, and a smattering of other housing forms. Fifty percent of the population are of working age. Twenty percent are seniors. Eighteen percent are children, and twelve percent are youth. The community has more children in the 5 to 14 age bracket than the city average, and significantly more seniors.

Over seventy-eight percent of the population are English speaking. The residents are, for the most part from a mix of British and European

backgrounds. Fifty-four percent of families enjoy an income in excess of \$100,000 annually. The average family income is \$167,892.

Christ the King Islington

Demographic information in chart and tabular form is found at Annex D.

Christ the King straddles two City of Toronto Communities – Eringate-Centennial-West Deane, and Etobicoke West Mall. It is located on Rathburn Rd., near Renforth Drive, in a middle class neighbourhood. Rathburn Rd. is the dividing line between the two communities. While Eringate has fewer immigrants than the Toronto average, The West Mall is at the City norm. In recent years several of the high-rise apartments near the West Mall have become home to refugee claimants entering Canada at Pearson Airport.

In Eringate, approximately 2/3rds of the dwellings are detached homes. Twenty-five percent are high-rise apartments; with the balance being semi-detached homes and townhouses. Fifty-three percent of the population are of working age. Eighteen percent are seniors, Seventeen percent are children, and twelve percent are youth. The community has more children and seniors, and the same percentage of youth as the Toronto average.

Just over sixty-one percent of the population are English speaking. The population is a mix of British and European origins, with a noticeable number of Chinese and Indians. Twenty-four percent of families enjoy an income in excess of \$100,000 annually. The average family income is \$63,564.

The community of West Mall has somewhat different characteristics. The housing mix is different. Only twenty-five percent live in single-family homes. Sixty-five percent of the Homes are in high-rise apartments. There are more children and seniors than the Toronto

average, and the same percentage of youth. Fifty-three percent of the population is of working age.

Only just over fifty-six percent of the population are English speakers. Twelve percent of families enjoy an income in excess of \$100,000. The average family income is \$50,953.

Comments

Although there are significant differences in the communities, there is really nothing that should make a noticeable difference in church attendance, with the possible exception of St Wilfrid's location. St. Wilfrid's is a modest suburban church. It may not be grand enough for upper middle class tastes. Both Churches are have good access to public transit; but are both some distance away from a subway. Being suburban parishes, both have adequate parking available.

Worship

St Wilfrid's offers two services on Sunday morning, both Eucharists, at 8:30 and 10:30 am. The Parish has apparently tried to emulate St. Thomas's, with a high liturgy and a paid choir.

The principal service at Christ the King at 10:30 am, alternates between Communion and Modern Morning Prayer. All services are based on the Book of Alternative Services (BAS). The early service, at 8:30 am, is a BAS Communion. There is also a mid-week Communion service, at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, followed by a coffee social. In addition, on the last Sunday of the month, Christ the King features "Gathering West " a contemporary ecumenical worship and praise experience featuring the F.A.I.T.H. worship band, choir and soloists performing powerful contemporary upbeat music.

Statistical Comparison

The Chart at the end of this chapter compares the statistical results from the incumbent's annual report to the Diocese, for both Churches,

during the period from 1991 to 2001. The Diocesan statistics themselves are located at Annex E.

As can be seen from the figures, both churches continue to have a healthy number of Easter communicants. Indeed, the 2004 figures, which are not depicted on this chart, but are available at Annex E, show that trend has continued. Both, however, have lost membership over the years as their communities have changed around them. The telling figure is the average Sunday attendance, a good measure of the health of a parish. In 2002, St. Wilfrid had fallen to 76. The 2004 figure is 66, not a good trend. What is, perhaps, more disturbing is the lack of support for organizations. There is no church school. The only church organization is the A.C.W., and I suspect that it is primarily a social club for retired ladies of the congregation. The only bright light is a servers group of 12 members, which appears on the 2004 Statistical Report. At least there is some sign of youth involvement in the life of the church.

Christ the King has also deteriorated, from an average Sunday attendance of 193 in 1999 to 132 on the 2004 Statistical Return. However, it continues to have a viable church school of some 30 children, a youth group, two women's groups and a family group, all with a healthy membership. The incumbent is aware that the Church's position has declined, and is working hard to reverse it, or to at least hold his ground.

The differences between these two churches are not what one would have expected based on the community demographics. By all rights, St Wilfrid's should be the more successful parish; however, that is clearly not the case. Before turning to a discussion of possible reasons, let us have a look at what is working right at Christ the King.

Christ the King and Gathering West

The service I attended was billed as "MMP" on the Church's website; which I took to mean Modern Morning Prayer, with the implication that it may be a services based on the Book of Alternative Services. Since the

other Morning Prayer services I had found used the BCP, I was determined to attend this one. As it turns out I was right in that it was Morning Prayer, but wrong in assuming that there would be a book involved at all. Indeed, I discovered there were no prayer books of any sort in the pews, where I had anticipated they would be, and so returned to the greeters to inquire. Seeing a rack of the BAS I helped myself while the greeter was occupied with other worshippers entering the church. I need not have bothered. Everything required for the service was printed in the leaflet.

I got a feeling that things were going to be very different at Christ the King when I entered the worship space. There was an electricity in the air, an expectancy. Having passed a choir in the hall and having seen both an organist and a praise band – a drummer, trumpet, 2 clarinets and 2 flutes, and a keyboard - at the front of the worship space, I was a little bit confused. Surely they could not both be playing in the same service could they? Yes they could, and they did, and it worked, in the context of that congregation, in that time and place.

The choir, gowned in dark blue with a magenta “V” scapular processed in to “Holy, Holy, Holy” in the traditional way. The Priest, dressed in white cassock alb, entered from the side and went to the keyboard. Yes, he was the keyboard player. Throughout the service there was a mix of the traditional and the modern, all held in a creative tension and orchestrated with a light touch by the Rev. John Phillips; who clearly loves what he does. The congregation loves to participate with him in the doing.

There was an abundance of music. The organ and choir led the processional, offertory and recessional hymns, and participated in the gospel rock material led by the praise band. There was a praise song before the children’s focus, and another following it. The psalm was a praise song version. A hymn (offertory) followed the Old Testament Reading. The Creed was a sung version. The Gospel hymn was a praise

song, as was the anthem which followed the sermon. The latter was in the form of an informal talk, rather than a scholarly address; and for even an Anglican sermon was quite short. There was a lot of lay participation in this service – choir, praise band, cantors and lead singers, readers, intercessor, greeters, crucifer and acolytes.

In conversation with Rev. Philips after the service, I learned that he had crafted this service to maintain and grow his church. With the changing composition of his community, there was an exodus of those who identify themselves as Anglican, and an influx of people with different ethnicity and denominational backgrounds. Having Morning Prayer allows them to try the “local” church, and see if they like it. As a result, his congregation includes a significant number who were not cradle Anglicans. For that reason he also moved the liturgy to an informal one, contained in the leaflet, and not requiring even the BAS. All of the elements are there, but he feels it is less intimidating for a new person, who is not inculturated in the Anglican way, and who may have come from a tradition that does not use a prayer book.

The unusual grouping of choir AND praise band keeps everyone happy. When he came to the church it had been a BCP parish, with a traditional choir and liturgy. Seeing the changing demographic in the community, he felt there was a need to become more accommodating to others who were not Anglican, and felt the need to introduce not only a more contemporary liturgy but praise song music as well. By keeping the choir, he avoided a confrontation that could have split the parish. The traditional hymns, done in the traditional way, meet the need of the people who grew up in the Anglican tradition. The contemporary music meets the need of those coming from non-Anglican backgrounds. Over time they have grown to also appreciate what is offered by the tradition. As a result, over the course of the year, the congregation is treated to

both traditional musicality and contemporary praise song worship. He has proven that they are complementary.

For those who want even more of a glory and praise service, there is “Gathering West”, a once a month late afternoon service devoted exclusively to this genre. There is no need for Anglicans who appreciate this kind of music to go elsewhere for the experience. It also opens the door to Anglican worship nor those who do come from different traditions

Does it work? The answer may simply be in the fact that as of March 5th, there were already twelve people signed up for the confirmation class. Confirmation was not scheduled until November, so there does appear to be some degree of eagerness to become full members of the church..

Analysis

Christ the King has indigenized its worship to accommodate the prevailing culture in which it finds itself. The incumbent has taken deliberate steps to become more open and welcoming to those who are not part of the Anglican tradition. By introducing Modern Morning Prayer, and the monthly gospel praise worship, he has opened additional portals of entry. There is more than one path into his church community.

Both the priest and the congregation are determined that Christ the King is going to survive the downsizing that was already being talked about by the Area Bishop for churches in his Episcopal area that do not meet the requirements of the sustainability model.

St. Wilfrid’s, on the other hand, has chosen to become even more Anglican to meet the same challenge; investing in choir leads and traditional musicality, seeking to become a St. Thomas’s of the West End. As Rev. John Phillips points out it is not working, as can be seen by the attendance figures. Perhaps the reason is that the High Anglican Cathedral service that St. Thomas’s performs does not work in a space

that does not evoke a traditional Cathedral, as St. Thomas's does. St. Wifrid's problems may stem from a lack of contextualization, offering a product that the community in which it is located does not want to purchase.

For Christ the King, weekly Parish Communion would have kept the doors closed to attracting new people and rejuvenating the church. The parish opted for survival and growth by becoming more open. At St. Wifrid's, it would appear, Eucharist-only worship is nourishing the faithful, but keeping the doors closed against renewal.