

St. Barnabas Church (Chester)

Parish Profile

February 2024



Purpose of this Document

Under the direction of Bishop Kevin Robertson, St Barnabas Church (Chester) is seeking a new Incumbent following an abbreviated, hybrid selection process. As a result, this document represents a “mini” Parish profile in keeping with that process. Taken together with the 2023 Vestry Report, the two documents should provide prospective applicants with an in-depth view of where we have come from, who we now are and what we aspire to be so as to enable the best match possible for a new Incumbent.

Parish Mission Statement



*To love and worship God together
through Christian fellowship and service
to the community.*






St. Barnabas: Our Parish Patron

Barnabas was a Jewish Levite, a member of the caste of priests. He was originally from Cyprus, but was in Jerusalem, and became one of the most prominent followers of Jesus in the early days after the Resurrection. In fact, 'Barnabas' is a nickname, given to him by the apostles. His original name was Joseph. 'Barnabas' means 'son of consolation' or 'son of encouragement'.

It is an appropriate title for a man who would sell a valuable piece of land and donate the proceeds to the church. Barnabas was an encouraging presence in other ways. He introduced Paul to the other apostles after Paul's conversion, and was an important part of Paul's ministry team.

But the life of a saint is not always sweetness and light. Barnabas and Paul had a falling out, perhaps disagreeing about the role of Barnabas's cousin, John Mark. They did agree, however, that it was crucial to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. So, Barnabas continued travelling and is thought to have founded the church in Cyprus and in Milan. Tradition tells us that he was martyred in AD 61.

History

| 1856-1857 | 1857 | 1907 | 1928 | 2024 - 1st Use of Accessibility Ramp |
|--|---|---|---|--|
|  <p>St. Barnabas Church History</p> <p>Building the church 1856-57 Playter Estate - Ellerbeck</p> |  <p>St. Barnabas Church History</p> <p>Finished Church 1857</p> |  <p>St. Barnabas Church History</p> <p>Church moved to Hampton & Danforth in 1907</p> |  <p>St. Barnabas Church History</p> <p>Hampton & Danforth 1928</p> |  |

St. Barnabas on the Danforth sits at the heart of the bustling and colourful neighbourhood of Riverdale. Looking at the streams of traffic and pedestrians passing by its door, it is hard to believe that this was once a country parish. In fact, it is one of the oldest Anglican parishes in Toronto.

1857 – Village of Chester - Discussion by the Diocese of Toronto took place about building a place of worship in the Village of Chester, north of city limits in the area now known as Riverdale.

In **1857**, the first Church was built on Ellerbeck Street, 200 yards north of the Danforth on property owned by the Playter Family, which they donated. Timber for the construction came from that property. The Church went by a few names in the beginning: St Johns Playter Corner, St John's Chester, and Church of the Epiphany. In 1872, the name was changed to St. Barnabas, Chester. The congregation grew and additions were made to the original building.

1907 – The present location was purchased at the corner of Hampton and Danforth Avenues. Monday, September 23rd, 1907 was moving day and the small wooden Church was moved across the Danforth on rolling logs. Danforth Avenue was a dirt road at the time, and rain that week caused the building to be stuck in the mud in the middle of the street, unable to be moved. Church volunteers cleaned up the building and put a ramp to the door to allow people to enter on the morning of Sunday September 29th, for their regular service.

The move continued later in the week to the new location. Two years later a brick building was constructed up to the Transept.

1918 – The completion of the Prince Edward Viaduct, which allowed parishioners and residents in Toronto to cross the Don Valley directly, rather than having to spend hours going down in the valley and then up again to the Village of Chester.

1918 – 1920s - Construction continued and the Church grew in size to where it is today. The Church held 800 people and in the 1920s and 1930s there were 1,000 children registered in Sunday School.

1950s and 1960s - The Riverdale Community continued to grow and by the 1960s had become very multicultural. The tree lined residential streets remained.

1970 – 2024 - St. Barnabas is a large building and our space began to be used for rental by many organizations including: the Children's Circle Day Care, that has been with us since 1974; the Latvian Lutheran congregation who have worshipped in our Sanctuary for almost 60 years; the Hampton Therapy Centre; sports groups; dance groups; concerts, art shows; and many other community groups, who continue to appreciate the space that the church can offer.

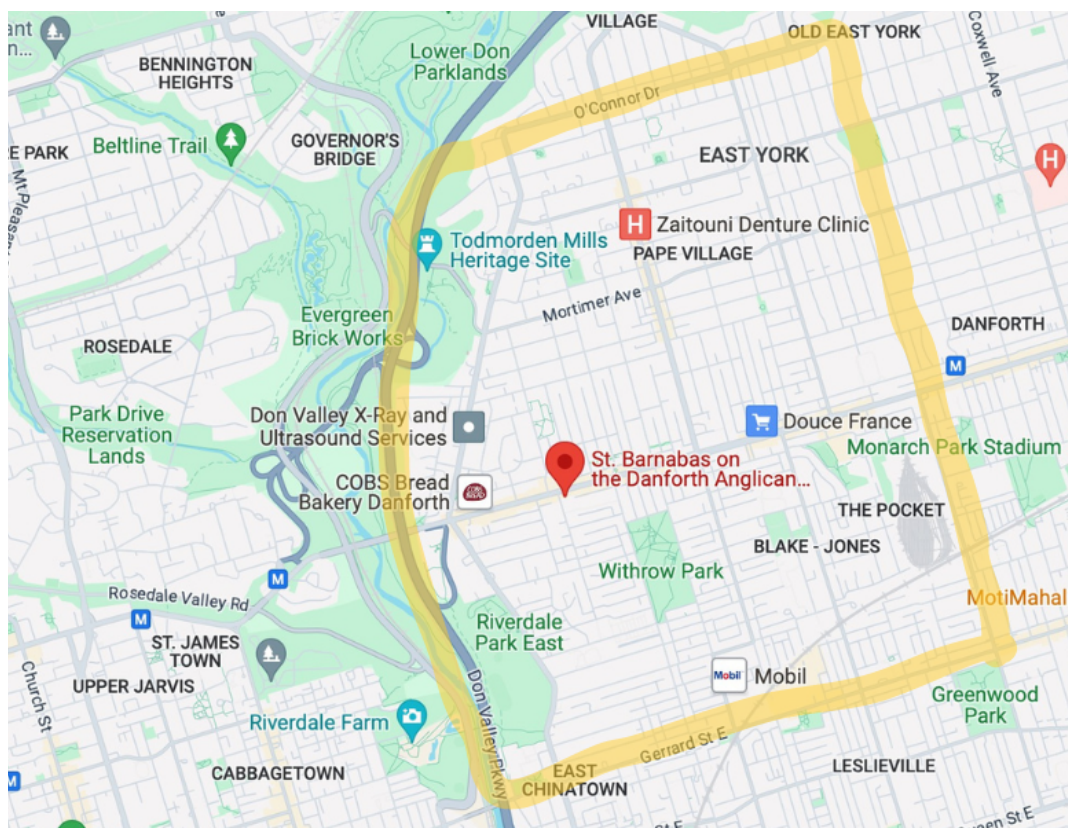
St. Barnabas accessibility – beginning with a lift installed off the playground in 2011, which assists the Day Care in transporting strollers, etc. from the basement level to the main floor of the Parish Hall. Shortly after that, an internal ramp was installed from the Parish Hall to newly installed washrooms and the Sanctuary. Later work, completed in 2024 has made the church completely accessible, with an exterior ramp into the new front entrance at the corner of Danforth and Hampton Avenues. The church is now much more visible and welcoming to the surrounding community.

We have now celebrated our 165th Anniversary and are proud to be part of the community.

Worship Services

- Sundays at 10:30 a.m. Choral Eucharist
 - *(Services video recorded and live-streamed)*
- Thursdays Noon Eucharist
- Last Sunday of the month 9.00 a.m. Said Eucharist (in addition to 10.30 a.m. service)
 - *(Anointing at both 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services)*
- Taizé service once a month at 7:00 p.m. on the 3rd Sunday

Parish Boundaries and Demographics



St. Barnabas Boundaries (Map credit: Google Maps)

Roughly bounded by Don Valley Parkway, Gerrard Street, Greenwood Avenue and O'Connor Road.

There are currently 131 people on the parish list. Average Sunday attendance is 36. Average weekly attendance is 47. Average online attendance is 13.

On Easter Sunday service attendance was 54 with another 17 online. For Christmas Eve and Day services, there were 133 in attendance with another 24 online.

Recent Ministry Initiatives

1. **Re-evaluating ministries** that we have always done to assess their effectiveness in this post Covid time with the idea of modifying them; looking to the community and what is important to them and working together with them.

2. **Community communication** – A blog was maintained during the course of the accessibility project to keep folks informed and was sent to local Business Improvement Areas who put links on their websites. [Click here to go to the construction blog>>](#) A couple of youngsters from a parish family delivered letters to folks on Hampton about events, and gift cards from 2 local businesses were given

to Day Care workers and construction workers to let them know that we knew they were being inconvenienced. The Day Care sends out email notices of planned events so that their clients are informed; we reach out to and for our neighbours with our sign by using it to advertise, free of charge, renter's events as well as local non-profit and Day Care events; we acknowledge the land we worship on every Sunday in the bulletin; provide a space to learn about loved ones lost by members and maintain a prayer list.

3. **Community events** are open to the whole neighbourhood, and we try to make them meet the needs of the neighbourhood, rather than what we think they need – e.g., health workshops; workshop on funeral pre-planning; carol singing on the Sunday before Christmas for shoppers; Pancake supper; having authors of children's books come and talk, read and offer their books; provide child minding for 2-3 hour one evening so parents can have a dinner out on their own; pet blessing on the street outside.

4. **Working with other faith communities** – we do this for Good Friday and also on Nov 11th for service outside; we work with other Anglicans to do things and pursuing other ideas, including Bible studies with 2 other Anglican churches and one by Zoom with the Lutherans. We have discussed sharing of resources and personnel as well with the other 2 parishes and on a Deanery level; we also have done combined services both ecumenically and interdenominationally – services for lost loved ones, pet blessings, Remembrance Day, and a service to help healing after a terrible, violent event in the community.

5. **Supporting others** - while we don't have the proper facilities to provide food for folks, we can assist other food banks and in other ways, e.g., opening our church to refugees who needed a place when East End United Church couldn't accommodate them for 3 hours on Thursday evenings; looking into how we can contribute to other food banks or collect other nonperishable items for folks as possible given our limited space and volunteers.



Good Friday Ecumenical Walk

6. **Virtual connections** - we moved to online services for Covid and have continued to do hybrid services so those not able or wanting to come are still able to take part. [Click here to go to the St. Barnabas on the Danforth YouTube Channel>>](#)

7. **Prayer as a focus** – we have: a prayer chain; a sheet to which names can be added of people for whom prayer is required; a prayer box on the Danforth where folks can drop off prayer requests to be included in the prayers on Sunday and in the prayer chain. We organized and held a prayer time during General Synod; we now pray once a month a Pause prayer for persecuted Christians in our world.

8. **Inviting speakers** to come and address the congregation during service – have had several Bishops; The Primate; a representative from Kennedy House; a Faithworks speaker and a refugee board member.

9. **Community outreach** with volunteers working very hard to hold yearly events like the Christmas Market and the Art Show which not only bring in many people, but also allow them to experience the church building.

10. **Different forms of worship** by offering a variety of services and times – mid week Eucharist, Taizé service, BCP and BAS service; we have also done services (with copyright permission as well as Diocesan) from other traditions e.g. New Zealand Eucharist, Lutheran service.

11. **Community service** with a Community Minister who also leads the children of our Spirit Squad. Planning is well advanced to have a Parish Nurse who will also do community and parish events and ministry.

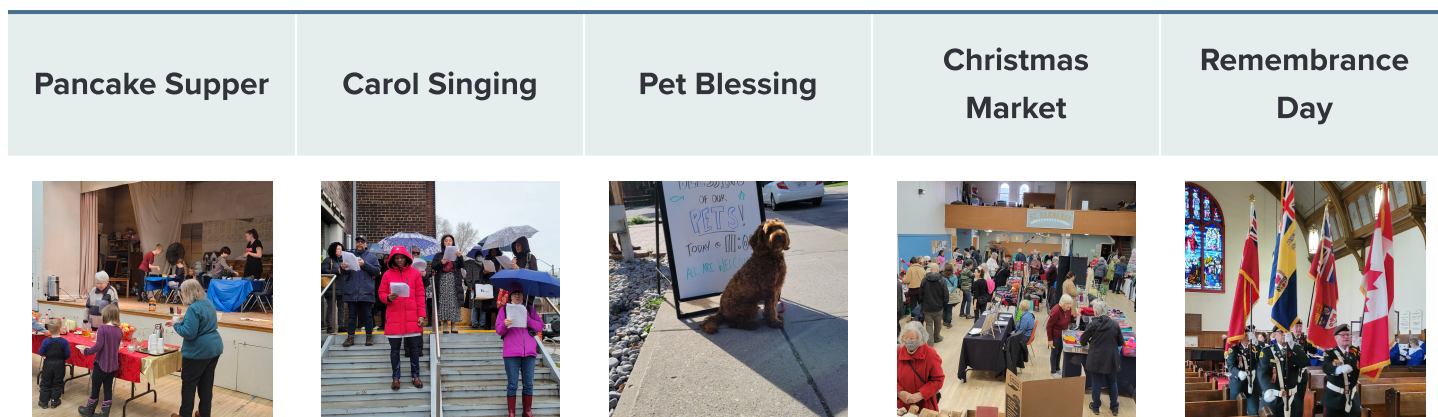
12. **Volunteer management** recognizing the wonderful work of our volunteers we celebrate Volunteer week; presented a small gift and had a cake at Vestry for wardens and all they did during Covid; thanks are given at announcement time and personally; we encourage those who haven't previously experienced or led our activities to try them.

13. **Sharing our resources** - generous with both time and money. Monthly donations to Kennedy House as well as at special times of the year; prior to covid we participated in activities at Kennedy House, and hope soon to be able to return to these; a recent large bequest allowed us to tithe to other nonprofits (including the Day Care playground and Faithworks).

14. **Continuing to change** - we continue to look forward and to plan how best to be church in this changing world through ideas and learning from books, webinars, and other churches.



Riverdale Art Show



[Click here to go to the gallery on the St. Barnabas website>>](#)

Community Groups Active at St. Barnabas

The St Barnabas facilities are used extensively by the surrounding community. Permanent tenants include:

- Children’s Circle Day Care (for 50 years) – servicing up to 150 children. It is a separate organization from the church but four members from the parish sit on the Board of Directors;
- Hampton Therapy Centre – three separate offices providing psychotherapy service to the surrounding community for more than 40 years;
- Two residential apartments - one of which presently houses recent refugees to Canada; and
- The Toronto East Evangelical Lutheran Latvian Church – who have been holding monthly church services and social gatherings for the past 60 years.

In addition, regular renters of our building include:

- Tai-chi Journey - Tai Chi classes for adults on Monday evenings;
- Shabnam Ghazi Yoga - Yoga classes for adults on Tuesday evenings;
- Rainbow Songs - music lessons for toddlers and their caregivers on Wednesday and Thursday mornings;
- Standing Wave Martial Arts - Martial Arts classes on Thursday evenings;
- Little Kickers - soccer classes for children on Saturday mornings;
- Toronto English Country Dance Assembly - monthly social dances on Saturday afternoons;
- Toronto Contra Dance - social dances every other Saturday evening; and
- Swing Toronto - swing and waltz dances classes and workshops on Saturday afternoons or Friday evenings, as well as social dances every other Saturday evening.

This list does not include those other groups that rent our space on a “one off” basis. We also make our space available for free on occasion for community groups needing support.



St. Barnabas Accessibility Ramp

Property Management Information

St. Barnabas Church was constructed between approximately 1912 and 1922. Over the past almost 100 years renovations and improvements have been made to allow the building to fulfill its purpose. As with all buildings this age where there are not unlimited funds, the need for upgrades can always be seen. The building consists of a worship area which can accommodate 400 people, and a parish hall made up of an upper hall and a variety of smaller rooms. This hall has a capacity of 150 people. There is a partial basement under the worship area and a full basement under the parish hall. The majority of the basement area is used by the Children's Circle Day Care for up to approximately 150 children. There are also two residential apartments within the building. Three of the areas in the parish hall wing are licensed to psychotherapists and the hall is used by a variety of sports, dance, yoga, exercise and mom and tot groups. Each year the Leadership Team discusses what priority repairs are needed to maintain the building in good repair. The last formal building inspection was completed in 2021.

The church also owns a Rectory at 20 Bowden Street, which is approximately three blocks away from the church, the subway, and the neighbourhood business area, south of Danforth Avenue. It was built in 1911 and is a solid brick three storey detached home, with approximately 2,000 square feet of living space and 800 square feet of unfinished basement. The house has five bedrooms and a dressing room, and 1.5 bathrooms. There is a separate garage with parking space for two cars. The house is partly air-conditioned. When not required by the Incumbent, the house is rented out and has just become available again with a long time tenant moving out in February. The house is now being repaired and redecorated.

What we are Looking for in a New Incumbent



From the collect for St. Barnabas:

"Let us faithfully witness to the Risen Jesus, giving generously of our lives and substance for the relief of the poor and the sharing of the Gospel, bringing encouragement to all."

The associated leadership qualities that we would like to have in our new Priest, includes the following:

- should be equally focused on the pastoral needs of the congregation and on outreach to the surrounding community;
- should be active and outgoing and able to easily relate to all age groups and cultures and capable of bridging generations;
- should be compassionate, spiritually balanced, and open to an ongoing dialogue between the Priest and the people with a collaborative communication style;
- should be able to develop and maintain good relationships with the Leadership Team, and all of the key parish stakeholders, including parishioners, staff, tenants, other clergy, and community groups;
- should be willing to serve on the Board of Directors for the Children's Circle Day Care;
- should ideally have had some experience at successfully supervising staff;
- should be steeped in the issues of today and able to lead discussion of those issues in the community from the Anglican Church of Canada perspective;
- should be able to deal with the marginalized community who frequent our doors;
- should be supportive of emerging ministries such as our new Deacon and the Parish Nurse; and
- should have a vision that can move us forward and sharpen the vision of our church in the changing marketplace.

Our Priest will not be alone, but rather part of a family of other neighborhood churches on the Danforth and various community groups. We, in turn, are a small hardworking and dedicated group here to support our Priest.

In terms of living in the church's Rectory, this is not a "must have", but wherever the Priest does choose to live should not be an impediment to getting easily to the church, so that travel time does not become an issue for being active on-site.