

Concentric Circles Strategy Official - Spring 2021

Over the past months we've been listening to the community, perceiving the needs within our church, and listening to the holistic hopes, dreams, and needs of those not yet in our church who live in and around each of our local parishes. We want to share a bit with you of the strategy that is emerging for how we can continue to be the best version of ourselves and move towards our vision of introducing more spiritually curious people to the Jesus-centred life through a movement of Jesus-centred churches.

The "concentric circle" image below is meant to display what various circles of relational discipleship and innovative outreach might look like in each of our parish settings.

These circles are essentially (but not exclusively) a strategy as a church to help us create community, deepen in discipleship, and equip Meeting Housers to live with a parish mindset.

A parish mindset means we live with purpose and awareness in how we share Jesus' life and love with the everyday people in our neighbourhoods, work places, and social networks. A parish mindset takes responsibility for the holistic - spiritual, mental, physical -- wellbeing of those who live in our parish in the ways that we can.

A parish mentality reminds us that church at its best exists for the benefit of those who are not yet part of a church.

Pause and reflect on this statement: statistics in Ontario tell us that most of the people who live in your parish aren't going to come to church or encounter Jesus unless we partner with the Holy Spirit and go to them first. Sound familiar? Of course, because that's how Jesus modelled it for us. [1 John 4](#) reminds us how Jesus came to us first, way before we thought of going to him. **Love always goes first.**

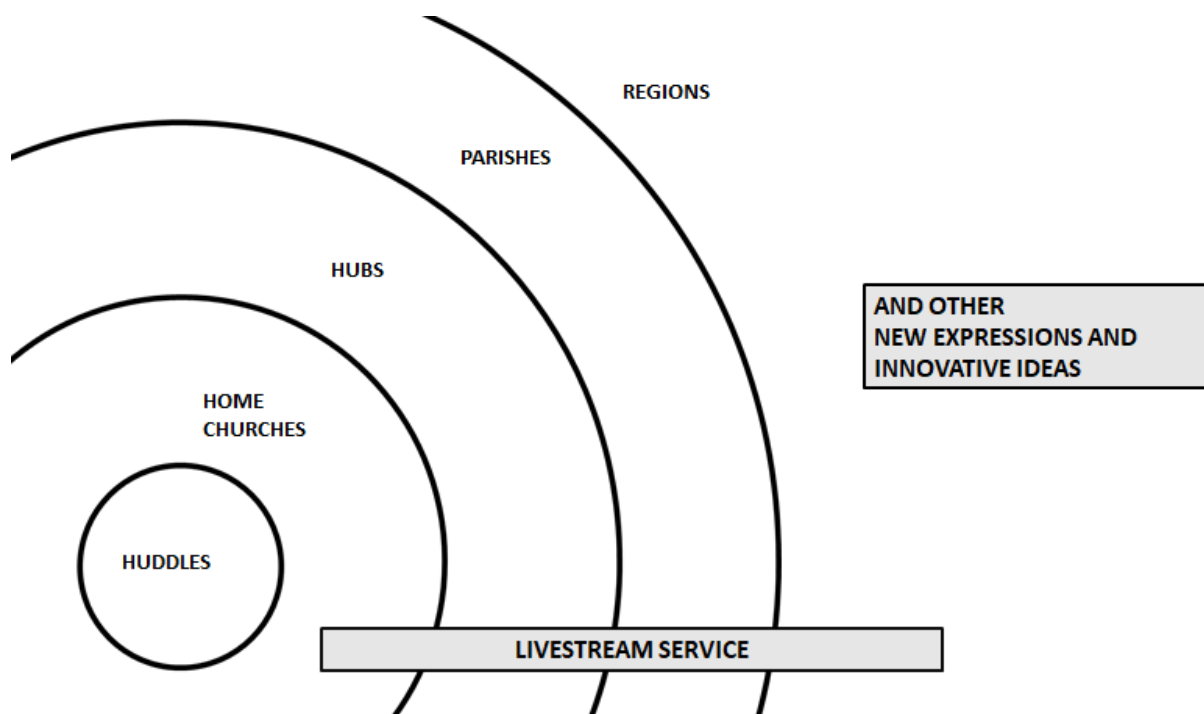
Parish-minded also means we go to others. Over the years we've primarily been a 'come to us' church. This means people heard about us and came to check us out in one of our site locations. Many have had their lives transformed by Jesus as a result. Today in Ontario - when very few people are likely to go to church - we have the opportunity to be a church that also 'goes to them'. We go to the people who won't 'come to us', just like Jesus taught us. Love goes first to the other.

Parish-mindedness isn't a magic idea that automatically rekindles our hearts for Jesus or for introducing people beyond our church to Jesus. But a parish mentality reminds us that we've been placed where we are for a purpose.

This doesn't mean we can do everything for everyone — we're not called to burn out for Jesus. Your parish already has a Saviour. But we've been given so much privilege and abundant

resources, and we want to challenge ourselves to use it for the spiritual and overall flourishing of those in our parishes in the ways that we can.

These concentric circles are not meant to be interpreted religiously but to portray the important principle that we need a strategy to help us be engaged in a variety of settings, with varying sized groups, in order to serve the diversity of our church and those in our Parishes who don't go to church.



Also, these circles help guide us as we strategize how to regather as we emerge from COVID. Let's walk through these layers of engagement.

Assuming that The Meeting House and Local Public Health guidelines are being followed, here are some creative gathering guidelines. Think of these as banks on a river that we are canoeing down together. How we navigate the river is full of opportunity for innovation and contextualization. These riverbanks (creative guidelines) are meant to encourage innovation, fresh attempts, and even failure by trying new things:

HUDDLES 2-4 people (The Dinner Table)

Purpose: Intimate space - Discipleship & Safe / Brave Vulnerability

- These are self-led and it will be up to the people engaged in each huddle to determine what format they will connect in. We expect participants in huddles to follow public health guidelines if they meet in person or outdoors (even though we will not provide oversight, or monitor huddles.)

HOME CHURCHES 15-20 people (The House Party)

Purpose: Personable space - Discipleship & Formation / Community building / Compassionate care for our Parish / Invitation to spiritually curious to find spiritual family

- Home Churches are our most regular connection points (in most cases, weekly) and will need to follow TMH / Local Health COVID guidelines for small group gatherings.
- These are groups of 10-30 people
- We encourage home churches to ensure its members can connect on-line if they do not feel comfortable meeting in-person should the home church go that route.

Hubs are the newest innovation to the concentric circle strategy and are not meant to just 'get us through' COVID. We believe these Hubs can serve a strategic purpose beyond COVID as we create spaces of belonging and mission for those in our church and those not yet in our church. Just to reiterate, we do want to press the point that Hubs are not a 'get us through COVID' until we can meet in larger 50+ sized groups.

This innovation is still in the beginning stages and will be experimental, with failure as a possible outcome (even that is a win) as we keep learning how to pursue our vision together.

HUBS 50 people (The Family Reunion)

Purpose: Social Space - Connection / sense of belonging into TMH family and culture / Invitation to spiritual family and care for those who can't make the leap to HC / Inviting spiritually curious friends to experience a Jesusy community / Celebration / Parish minded compassion and community presence

- Meeting Monthly - As we begin these, these may occur a few times a season and we are hopeful these are in planned by June towards launching over the Summer and into the Fall.
- Mid-sized groups of up to 50. The intention is to possibly combine 2-3 HC's to serve as the core, but not limited to just combining Home Churches to form these HUBs. As well, let's be invitational to others in our TMH community and those in our parish who are not yet part of our church.

- For the purpose of **connecting, a sense of belonging to our spiritual family and culture, celebration, introducing spiritually curious friends to Jesus and community in our church, and to find ways to be Parish-minded together.**

Ideas:

Communion (as allowed); eating together (as allowed); sharing God-stories; baptisms; child-dedications; parish-focused compassion & community presence / service opportunities (clean up a park, block parties to engage neighbours, making hygiene kits for the homeless, etc.); hosting spiritual conversations to get people interacting around the Jesus-centred life; inviting spiritually curious friends to experience a Jesus community; and hosting value-add engagements like mental health seminars, parenting seminars, etc. that are valuable for people at our church and friends who don't go to church.

- Because these meet monthly (when they can in-person) and likely will require rental space and fees we ask that these not be centred around the Sunday morning livestream experience, but a separate gathering that innovatively challenges ourselves to try new ways to be the church in your parish.

In other words, Hubs are a bit more:

- Like an ongoing community
- Strategic (towards our vision and mission)
- For connection, worship, celebration, formation, integration (sense of belonging for those newer to the church and beyond the church), and fun!
- Focused towards a specific group of people or geography (neighbourhoods, social networks, clusters of Home Churches)
- Invitational and missional
- Lay leader and team led

And they are a bit less:

- Like a one-time special event
 - An end in itself
 - A watch party
 - Sunday Service/Renew Service
 - Geared towards everyone in the Parish
 - Pastor driven and led
- The leap from Parish Gathering (on Sundays) to Home Church has been identified as a big barrier for many. Pre-Covid, about 30-40% of adults were in a physical Home Church setting. The mid-size (40-50) group may be an onramp space for those not relationally connected in

our church or beyond our church to make new connections and find a sense of belonging in our spiritual family.

PARISH GATHERINGS 50-250+ people (The Wedding Reception)

Purpose: Public space - Parish-minded Vision / Teaching / Worship / Invitation to spiritually curious to encounter Jesus

We are spending the next few months as a Sr Leadership Team, Pastoral Team, and Local Parish leadership teams to discern what Spirit-led innovations might look like in how we approach these whole Parish regatherings. We don't want to assume we will simply hit 'repeat' on everything we did before when we begin to regather.