

CHURCHES OF SIMCOE



COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY SCAN

*I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community
and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.¹
~ George Bernard Shaw*

APRIL 2010 COS REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
BACKGROUND	
What is a Community Opportunity Scan?	6
Who Are We?	6
Why Are We Doing a COS?	6
What Did We Hope to Accomplish?	7
Appreciations	7
PROCESS	
What Was Our Method?	8
DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE	
What Did We Learn About the Community?	10
Quick Facts	10
Ranking of Assets	11
Simcoe Demographics	12
Map of Local Simcoe Churches	13
Ranking of Needs	14
Clusters and Themes:	15
Family Matters	16
Building Community	20
Overcoming Poverty	24
Gaps and Root Causes	28
Can You Imagine?	29
DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SERVANTS	
What Did We Learn About the Church?	30
What Can We Learn From Others?	31
Putting It All Together	32
A Golden Opportunity	33
CONCLUDING REMARKS	
Benefits of a Network	34
Believing	35
ENDNOTES	
References	36
Footnotes	37

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2007, at a local Christian ministerial meeting, pastors discussed their desire for churches to be more of a blessing here in Simcoe, and the idea of conducting a Community Opportunity Scan (COS) was suggested. A COS is a study designed by Diaconal Ministries Canada to help churches discover opportunities to better serve their communities.

Looking at our town through the lens of this study, the COS team captured a snapshot of its people, its heart, its strengths and assets, its weaknesses and needs. We have participated in community roundtable forums, met with political leaders, businesses, schools, government and social agencies, and listened to our citizens. Interviews conducted by COS team members focused on identifying needs and gaps that the Church could bridge. We have summarized our findings into three primary areas of opportunity we have called clusters:

- Family Matters
- Building Community
- Overcoming Poverty

Specific themes were identified within each of these clusters and are discussed in detail in the body of this report.

During the COS process, we also learned some things about perceptions of the Church and our place in the community. Interview respondents were intrigued by the fact that churches are working together. Community leaders are enthusiastic for the COS initiative and welcomed our team into community forums. Schools and social agencies are excited by the interest that the churches are taking in their causes and by the prospect of increased assistance.

Such encouraging feedback inspired the COS team to review the community role of the Church in Simcoe. We believe that a golden opportunity exists to organize our collective capacity to form a network that will channel our cooperative care into the heart of our community, to better communicate with one another, to share the wealth of resources we've been given, to more effectively support agencies and programs and in so doing become an "irresistible influence" in our community.

A door is opening before us, an opportunity to practice servant leadership in new ways, to live what we believe, to be the hands and feet of Jesus, and to bring glory to God by humbly serving our community. What lies ahead, we can only imagine...

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.²*

~ Margaret Mead

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY SCAN?

- A Community Opportunity Scan is a comprehensive process of getting to know first-hand the people, organizations, resources and needs of a community.
- A COS also helps identify the unique gifts, resources and purpose of a church.
- With this information, a church can discern unique opportunities to:
 - create awareness of local issues
 - engage in community partnerships
 - evaluate existing programs
 - begin new initiatives
 - discover ways that God is calling a church to love its neighbours
- COS resources are available through Diaconal Ministries Canada, an organization whose mission is to inspire, equip and encourage churches to transform their community with the love of Christ.³

WHO ARE WE?

- We are a group of individuals, representing a number of Christian churches in Simcoe, who are interested in the current and potential role of the Church in the community.
- Our core team is made up of 12 members. Additional people joined the team at various stages to assist in the process of interviewing, discernment and prayer.
- We were in regular contact with our local ministerial fellowship, whose support, encouragement and counsel were an important part of our work.
- This Simcoe COS study is unique in that it is the first study that has been done collectively by several churches in a community. Other COS studies across Canada have either been done by churches individually or by a group of two or three churches with a more narrow focus.

WHY ARE WE DOING A COS?

- We believe that God is alive, active in our community, loving and caring for us and for all the people that live in our community. By embracing people in the community, helping them in practical ways, we want to show that His love is real.



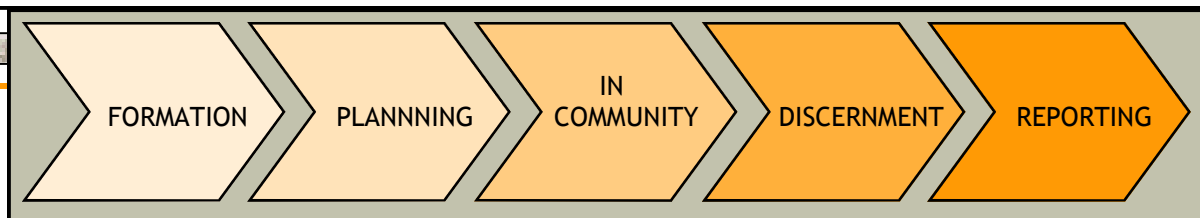
WHAT DID WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH?

- Through the interview process, we deliberately sought out and listened to a wide cross section of opinions, which gave us a balanced sense of our community.
- By taking a snapshot of our community's current condition, we hoped to identify gaps that exist between the community's needs and current resources.
- By keeping an open mind and asking God to lead the process, we were not limited by pre-existing paradigms. This allowed for integrity of purpose and freedom to explore possibilities of how the Church in Simcoe could serve the community more effectively.
- Knowing that our faith in God is a bond between believers, we wanted to appreciate and experience the unity and diversity within our team and within our churches.

APPRECIATIONS

- This COS study could not have been done without the involvement of many individuals and organizations. We would like to thank:
 - all of the interview respondents – individuals, social service agencies, owners and managers of businesses and non-profit organizations, school principals and staff, community leaders and pastors – for taking the time to be interviewed and sharing their perspectives. We have gained a greater awareness and appreciation for those who labour daily, helping to make Simcoe a better place to be.
 - Diaconal Ministries Canada for their assistance, Operation Manna for their financial support, and Tammy Heidbuurt for her expertise in guiding us through the process of conducting this Community Opportunity Scan.
 - the entire COS team, volunteers, prayer partners, pastors and supporters for their dedication and commitment to this COS study.





WHAT WAS OUR METHOD?

1. **FORMATION** (October 2007–June 2008)

- At a local ministerial meeting in October 2007, while pastors were sharing their desire for the churches to be more of a blessing in our community, the idea of doing a COS was suggested.
- Diaconal Ministries Canada offered their assistance, guidance and experience from other cities.
- Steps to form a team began, and volunteers from several church congregations met.

2. **PLANNING** (July 2008–October 2008)

- We purchased a Community Profile Demographics Study/2006 Census Data, prepared by Outreach Canada Ministries - Research Department. This study provided information on population distribution, family structures, housing, language, immigration and ethnic origins, mobility, occupations, education and income.
- The team researched and compiled a list of local churches, social agencies, schools, businesses and community leaders to be interviewed.
- The team designed questionnaires relative to each segment, including one for individual residents.

3. **IN COMMUNITY** (November 2008–September 2009)

- By the fall of 2009, we had conducted 210 interviews: 18 social and government agencies, 9 community leaders, 27 business owners and managers, 4 schools, 17 churches and 135 individual residents.
- In addition to conducting interviews, the team also participated in community roundtables – Better Together, Community Stability and Poverty Forums. These discussion groups meet regularly to brainstorm how community players can work together to meet the array of needs in Haldimand and Norfolk Counties.

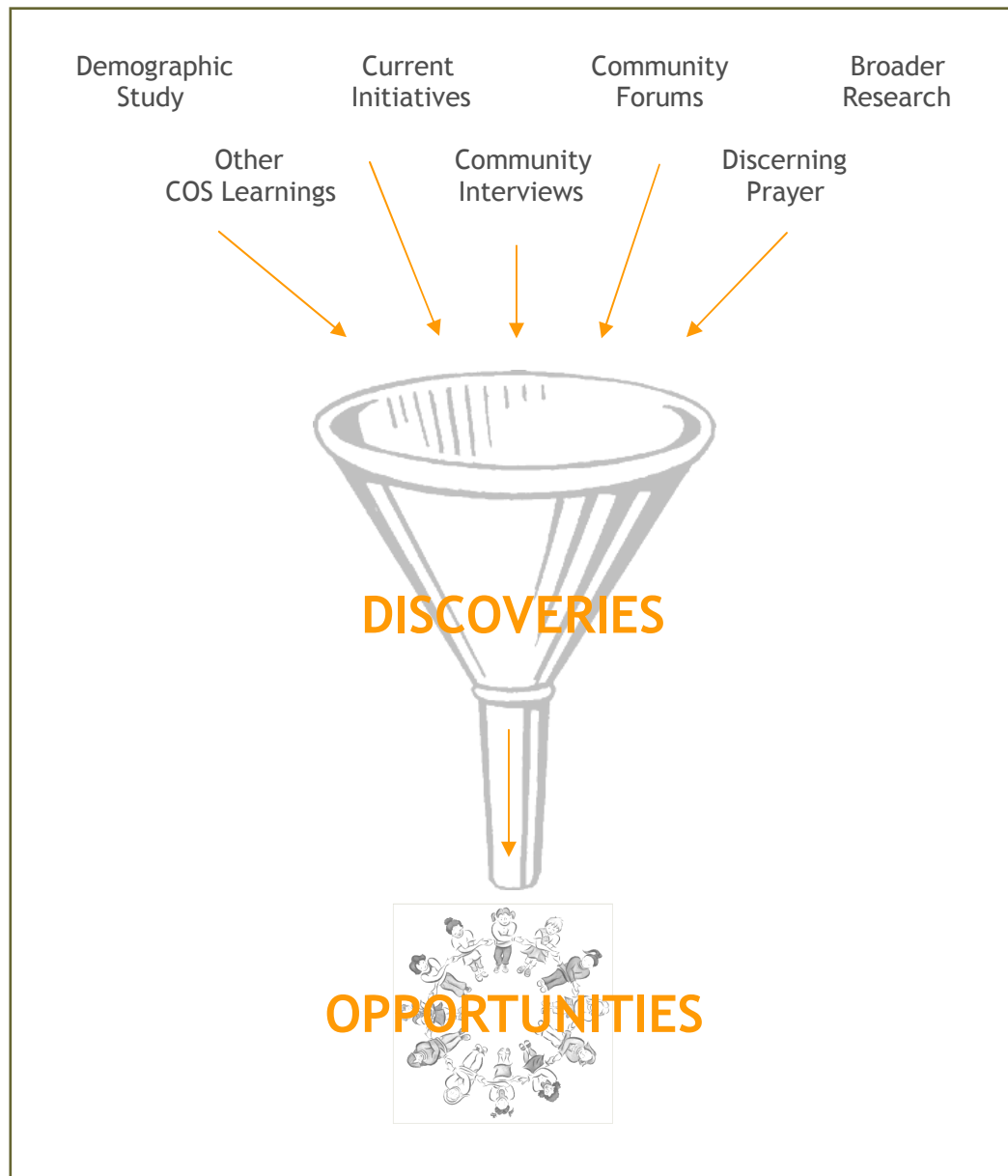
4. **DISCERNMENT** (October 2009–December 2009)

- By the end of 2009, the COS team began to examine the results, group commonalities and envision opportunities that the findings presented for the Church to become more involved.
- The prayer partners were an important part of our team throughout the entire process, particularly during the discernment phase. Their commitment to pray was essential and invaluable.
- During our meeting in November 2009, time was given to prayer and corporate repentance (2 *Chronicles* 7:14⁴). We became aware of hurts and offenses that the Church and the Christian community have caused. We humbly admitted our faults before God and one another. We recognized that taking this step is necessary for reconciliation and healing, in order for us to be part of the real and sustainable presence we hope to become in our town.

PROCESS



This funnel graph illustrates the way in which we channeled the interview and research findings into potential opportunities.



PROCESS

*The voyage of discovery is NOT in the seeking
of new landscapes, but in having new eyes.⁵*
-Marcel Proust

5. REPORTING (January 2010–April 2010)

- The discoveries and opportunities gleaned from the COS process have been summarized in this report, and will be presented to the ministerial fellowship in April 2010.
- We intend to share the COS findings with the churches and the community in the near future.

WHAT DID WE LEARN



Simcoe is a beautiful town
with many strengths, assets and resources.

With the Lynn River winding through the downtown core, numerous local conservation areas and parks, mature trees dotting the landscape and miles of walking trails, residents enjoy the distinctive natural charm that is unique to our town. Simcoe is the administrative and commercial hub of Norfolk County with local businesses and organizations serving both town and county-wide residents. The charitable nature of our people is evidenced by the number of organizations, service clubs, social agencies and churches partnering to help one another in our community.

Quick Facts

- Simcoe is the centre of an agricultural area known for tobacco, ginseng, vegetables and small fruits. Fresh produce and other farm products are available year round at the Simcoe Farmer's Market.
- Simcoe has it's own radio station, CD 98.9, and two newspapers, the Simcoe Reformer and the NYCA Hub.
- Simcoe is the home of the Norfolk General Hospital.
- Simcoe displays local history at the Eva Brook Donly Museum, a historic Victorian house museum.
- Simcoe showcases local artists and hosts exhibits at the Norfolk Arts Centre.
- Simcoe welcomes visitors to the Simcoe Rotary Friendship Festival, the Canadian Open Country Singing Contest, the Norfolk County Fair and Horse Show, and the Christmas Panorama of Lights.
- Simcoe offers several exciting cultural, entertainment and active lifestyle options, as well as a range of shopping experiences.
- The close proximity of Lake Erie and its neighbouring communities of Port Dover, Waterford, Delhi and Jarvis adds to the diversity and charm of Simcoe.

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY?

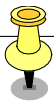


DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

Ranking of Assets

The following assets were identified during our interviews with community leaders, businesses, churches, schools and social agencies. These assets were listed in our survey in August 2009, when members of the public were asked to rank their relative importance. The results are summarized in the following table:

Valued Characteristics of Simcoe	
1	Safe community
2	People and organizations work together to improve the community
3	Beauty of the town and surrounding area
4	Variety of goods and services available locally
5	Cheaper cost of living than other centres (i.e. less expensive housing)
6	Sense of community, people are friendly
7	Variety of outdoor and recreational activities
8	Christian presence in the community
9	Small town pace of life
10	Close to larger cities and major highways



OPPORTUNITIES ... to build on the strengths within our town

- *Gather around the community-minded spirit of the people in our town by supporting existing service agencies and organizations*
- *Leverage existing events, groups and venues to strengthen community and enhance prosperity, economically and culturally*
- *Preserve and enjoy local parks, trails, conservation areas as opportunity for outdoor social and recreational outlets/activities*
- *Use local media to highlight and promote services, events, programs and initiatives*



SIMCOE DEMOGRAPHICS

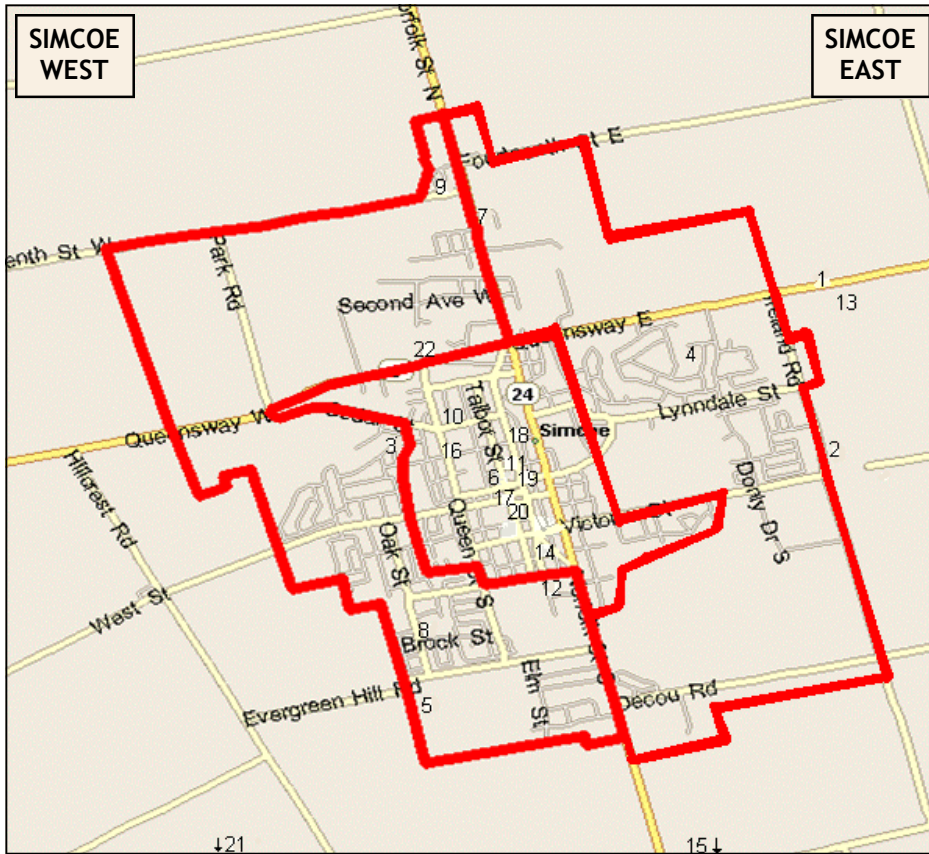
(2006 Census data)



	Simcoe West	Downtown	Simcoe East	Norfolk County	Ontario
Population	3902	5154	3681	62560	12,160,282
Percent of Simcoe Population by target area	30.6%	40.5%	28.9%	-	-
Median Age	49.3	42.1	45.7	43.3	39.0
# of Census Families	1137	1462	1126	18440	3,422,315
Average # of children living at home per census family with children still at home	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.9	1.5
Lone-parent families	15%	27%	15%	12%	16%
Marital Status: for people 15 yrs and older					
A) Single (never married)	24%	33%	25%	26%	32%
B) Married	52%	40%	58%	55%	52%
C) Widowed, Divorced or Separated	24%	27%	17%	11%	10%
Education: for people 15 yrs and older					
A) NOT finished high school	29%	34%	20%	32%	22%
B) Completed high school only	28%	28%	29%	27%	27%
C) Apprenticeship or trades diploma	14%	11%	9%	11%	8%
D) College or non-university diploma	18%	17%	24%	19%	18%
E) University certificate, diploma or degree	11%	10%	18%	11%	25%
Labour Force:					
Percent of those 15-24 years a) in the labour force	80%	73%	72%	71%	65%
b) unemployed	9%	16%	15%	10%	11%
Percent of those 25 years & older a) in the labour force	51%	58%	59%	63%	67%
b) unemployed	2%	5%	3%	3%	5%
Percent of males working full time, full year	54%	55%	59%	56%	58%
Percent of females working full time, full year	38%	47%	45%	26%	47%
Income: Average household income	\$59,417	\$46,267	\$78,138	\$64,867	\$77,967
A) Average male full time income	\$52,597	\$49,001	\$69,656	\$51,637	\$63,446
B) Average female full time income	\$40,779	\$32,117	\$45,593	\$36,499	\$45,109
Average individual after-tax income	\$26,649	\$24,448	\$31,455	\$26,898	\$31,011
Median individual after-tax income	\$22,464	\$19,175	\$24,872	\$22,077	\$24,604
Housing: Percent of people living in rented dwellings	29%	48%	13%	20%	47%
Average gross monthly rent	\$688	\$639	\$575	\$671	\$834
Households spending 30% or more of household income on shelter (RENTERS)	52%	49%	31%	40%	45%
Average owners monthly cost	\$802	\$800	\$842	\$876	\$1,167
Households spending 30% or more of household income on shelter (OWNERS)	16%	21%	10%	17%	28%
Average value of owned dwellings	\$183,357	\$150,848	\$201,391	\$203,985	\$297,479
Percent of dwellings built before 1946	15%	47%	11%	28%	-
Place of Birth:					
Percent of people born in Ontario	85%	85%	77%	82%	63%
Percent of people born outside of Canada	10%	8%	14%	13%	28%
Percent of people with home language—English	97%	98%	98%	94%	80%
Five Year Mobility:					
Percent of residents that moved within the last 5 years	27%	43%	33%	29%	41%
Percent that moved within local area	15%	28%	22%	16%	14%
Percent that moved from within Ontario	10%	13%	10%	12%	12%
Percent that came from other provinces	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%
Percent that came from other countries	0%	0.6%	1%	1%	5%

Map of Local Simcoe Churches

This map shows the three demographic target areas that were used in our study: Simcoe West, Downtown and Simcoe East. Church locations are also marked.



Christian Churches Serving Simcoe

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Bethel Baptist Church | 12. Seventh Day Adventist |
| 2. Calvary Pentecostal Church | 13. Simcoe Gospel Chapel |
| 3. Cedar Street Community Church | 14. St. James United Church |
| 4. Emmanuel Bible Church | 15. St. John's Anglican Church |
| 5. Evergreen Heights Christian Fellowship | 16. St. Mary's Catholic Church |
| 6. First Baptist Church | 17. St. Paul's Presbyterian Church |
| 7. Grace Baptist Church | 18. St. Peter's Lutheran Church |
| 8. Immanuel Christian Reformed Church | 19. The Comm |
| 9. Old Windham United Church | 20. Trinity Anglican Church |
| 10. Real Life Church | 21. Walsh Baptist Church |
| 11. Salvation Army Temple | 22. Word of Life Church |

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE



Ranking of Needs

The following needs were identified during our interviews with community leaders, businesses, churches, schools and social agencies. These needs were listed in our survey in August 2009, when members of the public were asked to rank their relative importance. The results are summarized in the following table:

Ranking of Needs in Simcoe	
1	Need for safety in the downtown area
2	Need for doctors, other medical professionals and facilities (i.e. hospice, mental health)
3	Need for meaningful activities and support for youth
4	Need for meaningful activities and support for seniors
5	Need for awareness and access to government and social services (i.e. mental health, substance abuse, family issues, financial assistance, pregnancy, food and shelter)
6	Need for affordable housing
7	Need for services to make newcomers feel welcome and part of the community
8	Need for encouragement and hope in current circumstances
9	Need for job opportunities in desired field
10	Need for post-secondary educational opportunities
11	Need for adequate job skills training and job counseling
12	Need for support to work through family issues
13	Need for affordable child care facilities
14	Need for places to discuss spiritual questions/issues
15	Need for public transportation
16	Need for support for migrant workers

The needs identified above were collapsed into three overarching CLUSTERS and several THEMES, as shown on the opposite page. On the pages that follow, each theme is described in detail, along with community concerns identified from the interviews, current initiatives and some opportunities for the Church to explore. The information outlined in this report is a summary of the COS findings and is not meant to be exhaustive.



Clusters and Themes

Cluster: Family Matters

Theme: Youth
Family Life
Seniors

Cluster: Building Community

Theme: Opportunities to Develop Relationships
Opportunities to Explore Spirituality
Revitalization of the Downtown Core
Newcomers and Migrant Workers

Cluster: Overcoming Poverty

Theme: Transportation
Employment Opportunities
Affordable Housing
Encouragement in Difficult Circumstances

INDIVIDUAL

FAMILY

COMMUNITY



THE HEART AND HEALTH OF COMMUNITY

Just as physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being comprise whole health in an individual, the same can be said of family and the community. This graph shows how the clusters, themes and needs identified in this study impact individuals, ripple outward, and intersect families and the community. Likewise, the resources and assistance given to individuals influence family and strengthen the community. What affects one indeed affects all.

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE





Youth

Cluster:

Family Matters

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

The theme of high risk youth was identified as the third most important need in our individual surveys. Specific concerns mentioned include loitering in the downtown core, teenage pregnancy, and youth engaged in activities such as drug and alcohol abuse, theft and promiscuity. Unemployment rates for families living in the downtown core are significantly higher than for families living in the east or west ends of town. Activities for youth are often expensive and those children most at risk are often least able to afford the cost of participation in sports and other recreational activities.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Mentoring and Purpose

There is a need for youth to be mentored, supported and connected with education and employment opportunities. They need safe places to hang out and meaningful activities for entertainment that are affordable and accessible.

Post Secondary Education

Post secondary educational opportunities are very limited in Simcoe. Most youth desiring an education beyond high school have to move away and many never return. This contributes to a lower educational demographic of the local population.

Employment Opportunities

Our educated youth often leave Simcoe to pursue better career opportunities in larger centres. Employment opportunities to attract and retain youth are limited even when the local economy is strong.

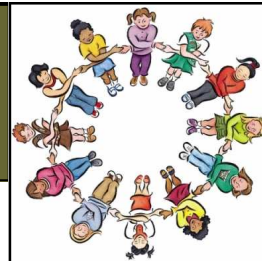
Job Skills and Counseling

Improved education and career counseling is needed for youth. Many young people do not know how to identify employment opportunities or acquire the skills needed to attain the jobs they seek. Some business owners believe that students coming out of college do not have the skills they are looking for to effectively contribute to the workplace.

We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.⁶
-Franklin D. Roosevelt



Youth



Youth aged 10-19 represent 12.5% of the Simcoe population.

Comparing Norfolk County statistics with the Ontario averages, 48.7% vs 49.2% of youth aged 20-24 have a high school diploma. 8.3% vs 15.0% of youth aged 20-24 have a university degree.

Comparing Simcoe statistics with the Ontario averages, 74.3% vs 65% of youth aged 15-24 are in the labour force, but 18.9% vs 11% of these youth are unemployed.

-Stats Canada 2006

Cluster:
**Family
Matters**

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- The Spot Youth Drop-In Centre – Youth Unlimited
- Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS)
- CAST—Crisis Assessment and Support team
- Your Life Counts (www.yourlifecounts.org)
- Community sports leagues, church teams, summer camps, arts initiatives
- Haldimand-Norfolk REACH (Choices Groups, U-Turn Program, Teen Resource Program- Haldimand and Norfolk Community Action Program for Children, Union House)

“Just one highlight in my career at the Spot? ... Jay was from a broken home, kicked out at age 17, into drugs and rehab, and began coming to the Youth Centre. We don't judge or tell them what to do, we just tell them 'God loves you and you don't need this.' We talked about his options, a trust relationship developed, and he eventually made an informed decision for Jesus. He turned his life around, went on to attend Bible college, is married, and volunteering at the Youth Centre. He's helped friends to change their lives too, and is just living for Jesus ... That's what excites me!”

~ interview with Dan Avey, the Spot Youth Centre

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE



OPPORTUNITIES ... to serve and engage youth

- Volunteer, partner with and gather around existing youth initiatives
- Organize “sponsor a teen campaigns” (in cooperation with other agencies such as BBBS and the Spot) to rally financial and emotional support for youth, either ongoing monthly intervals or one-time events
- Involve churches and businesses in sponsoring programs, education and events that target youth in areas of:
 - sports, drama, music, arts, etc.
 - environment, politics, community interest, etc.
 - leadership development, current issues that affect youth, etc.
- National Crime Prevention Council/Public Safety Canada has several programs which encourage teens to get involved proactively in their community, valuing them as essential and unique in the role they can play in society
- Support and promote local business initiatives aimed at offering job skills for youth and youth employment opportunities
- Offer a mentoring program that provides career counseling for youth
- Help youth to help others (create opportunities for youth to interact with the elderly and others in the community) to elevate their sense of belonging, purpose, self esteem, learn skills, etc.



Cluster:

Family Matters

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

Family Life

The family unit is the core building block of society. In order to have healthy children, we need healthy families. Our survey findings confirmed the need for families to be supported in the variety of challenges they face day to day.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Some of the areas of concern include family and marriage breakdown, parenting and single-parenting challenges, mental health, bullying, peer pressure, self-esteem, childcare, addictions, discouragement and loneliness. Also, in the individual interviews, accessibility to medical professionals and facilities was the second highest ranked need identified among residents, regardless of age.

There are almost twice as many single-parent families living in the downtown core than there are in other parts of town. (27% vs 15%)

The majority of single-parent families are single moms.

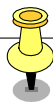
-Stats Canada 2006

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Haldimand-Norfolk REACH (Child and Youth Crisis Service, Child Clinical Services, Family Services Counseling Programs, Walk In Therapy Clinic, Parent and Caregiver Support Groups (Fetal Alcohol and Autism), Ontario Early Years Centre)
- Haldimand-Norfolk Women's Services - Women's Shelter
- Haldimand-Norfolk Community Action Program for Children
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Information Line
- Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS)
- Brant Family Counseling Centre
- Best Start Network (0-6 years)
- Children's Aid Society
- The Assaulted Women's Helpline
- Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868)
- Al-Anon and Alateen Family Groups
- Norfolk County Recreation Department
- Norfolk Pregnancy and Resource Centre
- Child and Youth Advisory Network (CYAN)
- NYCA Family and Summer Camp Programs
- Salvation Army Family and Community Services
- Victim Services of Haldimand-Norfolk (mobile crisis assistance for victims and their families)
- Calvary Pentecostal Church and Ecole St. Marie (day care services)
- Year Round Kids Clubs (Awana/Key Clubs/Girl Guides/Scouts/Sports/Arts)
- Kidzfest, Summer Day/Adventure Camps, Lifeskills program and Community seminars (local churches)



In every conceivable manner, the family is a link to our past, and a bridge to our future.⁷
~ Alex Haley



OPPORTUNITIES ... to serve and support families

- Volunteer, partner with and gather around existing family initiatives
- Check out Focus on the Family options/events (www.focusonthefamily.ca)
- Provide and host budgeting, parenting, marriage or other seminars
- Offer a Church-wide Vacation Bible School during March Break
- Start a 'Family-Befriending-a-Single-Parent-Family' mentor-style ministry

Seniors



Cluster:
**Family
Matters**

Seniors are valuable but often undervalued. As a vital part of both family and community life, their experience, wealth and time can offer a legacy of wisdom and stability, especially in these uncertain times. Sadly, as seniors age, they are often restricted by the limitations of health, mobility, lack of meaningful activity or opportunity, either by society or self imposition.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Due to the fact that there is a higher percentage of elderly citizens in our town and a trend toward an aging demographic, there is a heightened need for proactive planning to better serve our seniors. Areas of concern include accessibility to medical professionals, facilities, public services, affordable housing, transportation, isolation, safety, and help with home maintenance and recreational activities.



The median age of Simcoe residents is 45.3 yrs compared to the provincial median age of 39.0 yrs.

Seniors aged 65+ represent 21.6% of the population of Simcoe, compared to 15.8% of the population of Ontario.

One third of our seniors live alone, 39% of them are downtown.

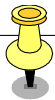
-Stats Canada 2006

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Senior Support Services
- Alzheimer's Society (Day Away Program)
- Meals On Wheels
- St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen
- Seniors Programs (local churches)
- Nursing Homes and Hospital Visiting (local churches)
- Adult Program for caregivers (facility provided by St. Peter's Lutheran Church)
- Victoria Eldercare

*What cannot be achieved
in one lifetime
will happen
when one lifetime
is joined to another.⁸
~ Harold Kushner*

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE



OPPORTUNITIES ... to serve and engage seniors

- Volunteer, partner with and gather around existing seniors initiatives
- Explore the possibility of a Church-wide seniors ministry collectively, involving:
 - socials, games, things to learn and do
 - day-away events
 - offering speakers and seminars on issues relating to aging
- Start a Saturday minor repair & maintenance ministry for seniors needing help at home
- Help seniors help others (create opportunities for seniors to interact with the youth and others in the community) to elevate their sense of belonging in the community, to share experiences, wisdom, etc.
- Encourage opportunities for able seniors to volunteer and contribute in meaningful and much needed ways





Opportunities to Develop Relationships

Cluster:

Building Community

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community. Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.⁹
-Cesar Chavez



In healthy communities, every citizen is embraced and has an inherent sense of belonging. In response, every citizen contributes what they have to give. It is through relationships that communities become strong, vibrant and prosperous, socially and economically.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

From the interview findings, it was apparent that the lack of meaningful relationships is a root cause of many problems faced by our residents.

- youth, seniors, single parents, newcomers
- the “haves” and “have-nots”
- the lonely, the discouraged, the busy

Many people just need friends who care, who offer support in times of need.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Wrap Around Simcoe Support Programs
- North Shore Singles Group
- Friendship Festival
- Friendship In Faith – for people with physical developmental challenges (local churches)
- Christian Bikers Group
- Haldimand-Norfolk Resource Center Drop In – for people with mental health issues
- Community suppers, picnics and social events (local churches and service clubs)

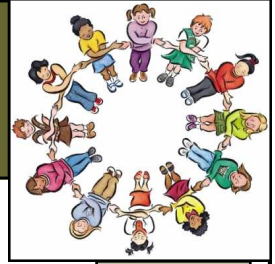
Many of the people we service are in unhealthy relationships... lamenting that all their friends are in an environment that's not good for them.
- agency interview respondent



OPPORTUNITIES ... to develop meaningful relationships

- *Spend time where people frequent, so that through casual conversation, friendships can be struck*
 - The Comm, and other coffeehouse-like atmospheres
 - organize regular or one time themed events, recreational activities or community gatherings
- *Develop an ad campaign/committee that intentionally promotes COMMUNITY in Simcoe*
- *Participate in current social and community groups/events/activities already offered in town (i.e. the Lions Club, the theatre and arts offerings, the Fair and Festivals planning groups, Recreation boards and leagues, etc.)*
 - Offer financial support to those who cannot afford to attend community events
- *Hold community interest fairs/talent shows/dinners or other events, hosted by the collective Church*
- *Encourage each member of the Church to be involved in the community in some way, shape or form*

Opportunities to Explore Spirituality



Cluster:
**Building
Community**

There is a growing openness in our society to explore spiritual issues. People are searching for meaning and purpose in life, looking for real solutions to real problems. With that comes an increased spiritual awareness, and an interest in engaging in conversation to better understand the world in which we live.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

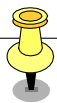
Some of the interview responses indicated that people are looking for a place to ask questions of faith. However, there is an inability for some to go to the Church because of a perceived intolerance among Christians.



*He who has a why to live
can bear almost any how.¹⁰
~Friedrich Nietzsche*

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Alpha
- Church social events
- Promise Keepers Events
- Bible Studies and Church Services
- Women's Connection – We Believe in Simcoe Day
- Community Health Fair



OPPORTUNITIES ... to explore spirituality

- Participate in the “Community Health Fair” at the Simcoe Rec Centre
- Intentionally offer courses and question and answer forums (i.e. Alpha, church Visitor Classes, etc.)
- Gather periodically in the community for worship (i.e. arenas, summer outdoor atmospheres, etc.)
- Write weekly ‘Church-in-the-Neighbourhood’ articles in the Hub or publish monthly newsletters
- Simply live our faith where we live

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE



Revitalization of the Downtown Core

Cluster:

Building Community

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE



Despite the fact that residents ranked community safety as Simcoe's number one strength, the safety in the downtown core also appears as a significant concern, particularly as it relates to drug and crime-related problems. While the recent improvements have greatly added to the charm and beauty of our downtown, some people believe that further enhancements would help address this issue.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Many of the interview respondents said they were nervous going downtown at night. Several factors contribute to this:

- dark alleyways behind stores
- adult entertainment clubs that draw questionable activities
- loitering in combination with a perceived inadequate police presence
- vacant buildings (including the old Cannery)
- the seasonal influx of migrant workers

Suggestions we heard for adding to the downtown ambiance include revamping store fronts, attracting and promoting unique stores and boutiques, installing evening lighting in darker areas and adding litter bins and rest areas.



CURRENT INITIATIVES

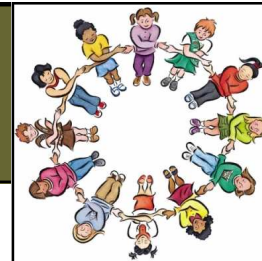
- Downtown Simcoe Revitalization Plan (Business Improvement Area – BIA)
- Norfolk County OPP Community Services Unit
- Church of the Arts (St. James United)
- The Comm – trying to create culture and a 21st century mission feel in the downtown core
- Christmas Panorama of Lights



OPPORTUNITIES ... to revitalize the downtown core

- *Volunteer, partner with, gather around and financially support existing downtown initiatives*
 - *meet with the BIA to discuss ways that the Church can support the pending downtown Master Plan report*
 - *assist Panorama with the maintenance of existing displays and create new ones*
- *Suggest the possibility of downtown restaurants adding summer outdoor weekend sittings to add a welcome and social atmosphere*
- *Close Robinson Street on summer Sunday afternoons and host Simcoe Downtown 4-hour-mini-expos, with themes such as "Community and Kids ... or Youth or Family or Seniors or Farmers or Fishermen or Ice-cream or Chocolate or Line Dancing" ... or any local interest. The possibilities are endless.*

Newcomers and Migrant Workers



Cluster:
**Building
Community**

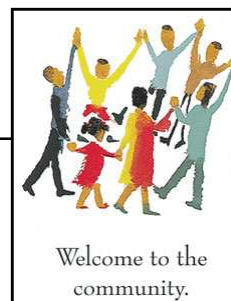
While our town is considered friendly with a warm small town community atmosphere for residents, newcomers have found it difficult to break into existing social circles. The fact that the population is less diverse ethnically and less transient than the provincial average may accentuate feelings of intimidation for newcomers.

Offshore workers from Mexico and the Caribbean move into the local area every spring, and provide tireless labour to our agricultural sector. While most don't actually live in town, they come into town on weekends to shop and socialize.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

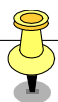
Those who were interviewed as part of the COS process did not specifically acknowledge newcomers as an issue needing to be addressed. However, through the COS team's participation on the Better Together Roundtable, we have learned that there is a growing interest in celebrating the cultural mosaic, appreciating both the people who have lived here for many years and those who have recently moved here.

Interview respondents expressed both compassion and concern for our migrant workers, desiring that we raise the bar to ensure that they are treated fairly and respectfully by all citizens. At the same time, there are those who spoke of fear and intimidation due to their overwhelming numbers downtown on Friday nights. This challenges our community to genuinely embrace diversity.



CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Welcome Wagon
- Information Centre
- Better Together Roundtable
- Cultural Roundtable
- Refugee Sponsorship (local churches)
- Caribbean Workers Outreach Program (Emmanuel Bible Church)



OPPORTUNITIES ... to foster a welcoming community

- *Volunteer, partner with and gather around existing welcoming initiatives*
 - continue to support Better Together Roundtable
 - add a more intentional welcome from the faith community to the Welcome Wagon package
- *Begin a Spanish speaking ministry for Mexican offshore workers learning from successes of the Jamaican worker program*
- *Make personal connections with people—get to know our neighbours and newcomers*
- *Become involved in the town's Mexican Independence Day Celebration annually in September*

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE



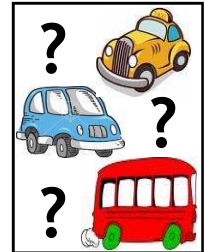
Transportation

Cluster:

Overcoming Poverty

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

Transportation is a necessary and often 'taken-for-granted' part of life. For those without personal transportation however, freedom is restricted. These people often find themselves relying on others to get around, limiting their ability to go about their daily affairs efficiently.



COMMUNITY CONCERNS

The lack of public transportation was mentioned frequently in the interviews conducted by our team. It's a problem that has been acknowledged for years, but inadequately addressed to date. In the Community Priorities in Haldimand and Norfolk report prepared by the United Way in 2004, transportation was identified as one of eleven key priorities in the County. The scope of the need is three-fold:

- getting around within our town
- linking with smaller centers within the County
- accessing larger cities beyond

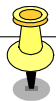
This need is felt most acutely by seniors, students, people with disabilities and lower income residents.

Currently, 12% of people employed in Simcoe either walk, bicycle, or take a taxi to work. It is not known how many people do not have employment because they have no means of transportation.

-Stats Canada 2006

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Spinning Wheels Project
- Salvation Army Family Community Service
- Senior Support Services
- Courtesy Cabs



OPPORTUNITIES ... to expand transportation options for those in need

- *Get better acquainted with and become involved in current transportation projects, such as Spinning Wheels*
- *Explore the possibility of a Church-wide driving/delivery ministry to help seniors and others get to/from medical or basic necessity locations*
- *Explore the possibility of setting up a used car clinic/vehicle donation program which repairs or recycles vehicles for the benefit of low-income families*

Employment Opportunities



Employment not only gives people an economic means to survive, but also a sense of purpose and meaning. As such, unemployment rates provide a relevant measure of the health of the local economy and social morale.

"The job market in Haldimand-Norfolk ranks among the worst in the province. The recent economic downturn has resulted in an unemployment rate of 11.2% in our area, nearly two points higher than the provincial average."
~ *Simcoe Reformer*, June 10, 2009

Cluster:
**Overcoming
Poverty**

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

There is an interconnectedness between education, a skilled workforce and job opportunities in desired fields; all three need to coexist for any one of the three to function optimally. Interview feedback indicated frustration by both employers and employees, because of significant limitations that exist in all three of these areas.

57% of the population in Simcoe has a secondary school diploma or less. Only 12% of the population have a university degree.
-Stats Canada 2006

Business owners are "challenged to find and keep skilled staff. Those who have the expertise and abilities are often tempted to relocate outside of Simcoe where there are better career opportunities for them."
"The employment opportunities are limited for graduating students."
"Post-secondary educational opportunities are limited in Simcoe."
~ 3 interview respondents

Our local unemployment rates have been significantly impacted by the recent series of layoffs at U.S. Steel, where more than 1,100 jobs were lost. Some local studies have determined that for every job lost at the Lake Erie plant, there have been up to seven other spin-off jobs affected. The snowball effect this has had on our community and local economy has been devastating.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Employment Insurance
- The Employment Centre
- Haldimand-Norfolk Social Services
- Return to Work Action Centre
- Salvation Army - Career Development
- Norfolk District Business Development Corporation
- Fanshawe College Career and Employment Services
- SCOR (a regional partnership for economic development)



The Norfolk District Business Development Corporation has seen a 70% increase in interest in their Supplementary Employment Benefits Program for new small business start-ups.
~ *Simcoe Reformer*, May 28, 2009

This indicates a recent rise in the number of people seeking alternative careers.

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE



OPPORTUNITIES ... to improve education, training and employment opportunities

- Establish mentoring programs, where retirees or existing business owners advise new business startups. Perhaps this could be done alongside other agencies, such as the Norfolk District Business Development Corporation
- Support local economic development to welcome new business to our community
- Volunteer with organizations that provide literacy training (i.e. Haldimand-Norfolk Literacy Council)
- Encourage apprenticeship opportunities in our area by connecting employers with trade schools



Affordable Housing

Cluster:

Overcoming Poverty

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

Affordable and safe housing is a basic need of every citizen. While Simcoe is one of the least expensive communities in Ontario for housing, many people are inadequately housed.

The number of people waiting for subsidized housing grew 10% in the last year. 31% of those had dependents and nearly 14% were over the age of 65. But the largest group of individuals on the waiting list continues to be singles under 65 years of age.
~ Simcoe Reformer, Oct. 7, 2009

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Concerns identified in the interviews as they relate to housing include:

- The expected wait times for subsidized housing are too long. Normal wait times vary from 1-4 years, while those in abusive situations wait from 4-6 months.
- There is a need for affordable housing for young families that is both safe and maintained.
- There is a need for emergency shelter and short term housing for people in crisis.

The following demographics are noteworthy:
48% of downtown residents rent, compared to 13% and 29% of residents in east and west Simcoe.
The average gross monthly rent in Simcoe is \$639, compared to \$834 in Ontario.
The average owners' monthly cost is \$812 in Simcoe, compared to \$1167 in Ontario.

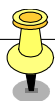
~ Statistics Canada 2006



Households spending greater than 30% of income on shelter	Simcoe West	Downtown	Simcoe East
Renters	52%	49%	31%
Owners	16%	21%	10%

CURRENT INITIATIVES

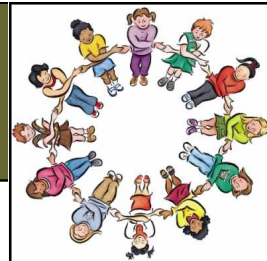
- Provincial Rent Bank Program
- Queen Street housing
- Kent Park Housing - Maranatha Gardens
- St. Paul's Court



OPPORTUNITIES ... to improve accessibility to affordable housing

- Explore the possibility of churches collaborating resources to build and manage an affordable housing facility, such as the Markham Interchurch Committee for Affordable Housing
- Initiate local service projects either as a yearly blitz or an ongoing ministry;
 - matching charitable construction donations of time and materials
 - to fix up or teach repair to homeowners
 - to help landlords repair damaged rental units
- Explore a Habitat for Humanity project

Encouragement in Difficult Circumstances



When dealing with the personal crisis created from this present economy, people don't know all of the resources available. How do you deal with a broken spirit?

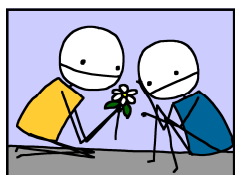
~ Mayor Dennis Travale, interview respondent

Cluster:
Overcoming Poverty

People respond differently to the circumstances in which they find themselves. This final theme in our report identifies the emotional impact that many people in our community are dealing with. Discouragement is growing, due in some part to the economic downturn. The more issues people face in their life, the more likely despair may threaten, and the more distant hope may seem.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

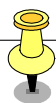
Based on feedback from the interviews, hopelessness is faced by all members of society, regardless of age or socio-economic status, but it was most often noted among youth.



*In every community there is work to be done.
In every nation, there are wounds to heal.
In every heart there is the power to do it.¹¹
-Marianne Williamson*

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Celebrate Recovery
- The Farm Line
- Women's Shelter
- Christmas Food Hamper and Toy Program for kids
- Fireworks Display on May 24 (Calvary Pentecostal Church)
- Gift giving to Sprucedale inmates (Calvary Pentecostal Church)
- Grief Share (Emmanuel Bible Church)



OPPORTUNITIES ...to give encouragement

- Volunteer, partner with and gather around existing care initiatives
- Volunteer at the Sprucedale Youth Centre
- Organize or promote individual RAKEs (Random Acts of Kindness Everywhere)
- Intentionally look for and listen to those who are hurting
- Initiate a Church-wide community care ministry, extending encouragement and support in practical ways
 - greeting cards, meals, visits
 - one-time seminars on topics related to discouragement and hope
 - consider forming small groups (friendships/discussion) around themes where discouragement threatens

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

GAPS AND ROOT CAUSES

As we listened to our community, heard about concerns and needs, and observed strengths and current initiatives of support, the COS team was amazed by the number of services that are already in place to help people:

- in the public and private sectors
- by individuals, agencies, clubs, businesses and churches
- organized as well as spontaneous or one time acts of kindness.

There are likely many that we didn't come across in our study. Yet despite the successes of these programs and efforts, gaps do exist between real needs and the community's ability to date to meet those needs. Many people in our town are still hurting.



Two types of gaps are identified below:

1. Linking initiatives with need:

- Awareness and Accessibility:
In some cases, people in need simply do not know what services exist or how to access them. Community leaders and social service agents are looking at ways to better and more efficiently link the services offered with those who need them.
- Insufficient Resources:
The number of people in need exceeds the resources available. Many of the current initiatives require additional financial and volunteer support to keep up with existing and increasing demand.
- New Initiatives:
There are some needs in the community for which there is little support currently. New programs and ways to provide assistance are still needed.

2. Root causes of struggles:

Many of the issues identified in this report overlap one another and are interconnected because they are symptoms of larger underlying problems.

- Learned Behaviours/Education:
Some of the problems in our society are the result of generational choices and learned behaviours, cycles of social dependency and family instability.
- Apathy/Resignation:
The problems in society today seem so large and daunting that discouragement has progressed to the point of hopelessness. Individually, we may feel limited by what we can do, but collectively, shared hope can unleash power.
- Living Real:
People often live in denial of real problems, hiding behind masks to protect vulnerabilities. This can add to the problem by isolating people from each other, limiting the support and care being offered.
- Polarization of Cultures:
During the interview process, our residents clearly recognized two distinct cultures in our society – those who “have” and those who “have-not” – a widening gap between us. While this distinction may seem to be primarily lifestyle-related, interview results suggest that people in all income brackets suffer from relational poverty. Most of us are inclined to develop relationships with others most like ourselves. But caring interpersonal friendships that cross social classes, neighbourhoods and churches can offer new perspectives, which in turn can offer new hope for people to not only survive, but thrive.



CAN YOU IMAGINE?



DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

Attempts to overcome root causes in our community may seem overwhelming, but as one of our interview respondents stated, “I believe that we have all of the resources among our faith community to meet the needs of our town. Imagine the impact we could have when we all commit to helping each other...”

- “Can you imagine...
 - ... every child needing a mentor having a mentor?
 - ... every single-parent needing a friend for support and encouragement having a healthy stable friend?
 - ... every school in town implementing the Big Brothers Big Sisters ‘Adopt a School’ program, supported by a community group, church or business, so that children who might otherwise fall through the cracks have personal mentoring and coaching from people who care?”

(~ Patti O’Reilly, Big Brothers Big Sisters)
- “Can you imagine...
 - ... building a new youth centre on a vacant lot in the downtown core where youth and young adults can:
 - play basketball, do homework, watch sports on television, play games and musical instruments in a safe, healthy and welcoming place they can call their own?
 - eat free breakfasts or after school snacks instead of going to school or coming home hungry?
 - receive care and counseling, free of charge, to help overcome addictions and cope with peer pressures, family problems and other disabling struggles?
 - ... having enough finances, workers and volunteers to move from part-time to full-time, to the streets, to community sport and other youth programs, and into schools?”

(~ Dan Avey, The Spot Youth Centre)
- “Can you imagine...
 - ... a series of meal preparation programs that run weekly in different locations, with the aid and support of various faith groups, to help low-incomers stretch their resources and build self-confidence, budgeting skills, recipe portfolio and relationships, all at the same time? A Community Kitchen can accomplish all this.
 - ... a faith-group-administered type of ‘job bank’, where the ultimate goal was not to gain employment, but where the ‘depositors’ use their mutual skills to meet one another’s needs, building friendships with one another and perhaps also with Jesus?
 - ... no division among the Body of Christ, no secret thoughts of superiority or religious smugness about ‘how much better we do things than how *they* do things’, just a recognition that we do things differently? Sounds like heaven on earth? If we will humble ourselves and pray, asking God’s forgiveness for our spiritual pride, I believe it’s possible.”

(~ Cherrie Ryerse, Salvation Army)
- “Can you imagine...
 - ... the community in which we live being genuinely thankful for the Church?
 - ... city leaders valuing our friendship and participation in the community – and even asking for it?
 - ... the neighbourhoods around our churches talking about how good it is to have churches in the area, because of the tangible witness we’ve offered them of God’s love?
 - ... a large number of our churches’ members actively engaged in, and passionate about community service, using their gifts and abilities in ways and at levels they never thought possible?
 - ... the community actually changing (*Proverbs 11:11¹²*) because of the impact of our involvement?
 - ... many in our city, formerly cynical and hostile towards Christianity, actually praising God for the Church and the positive contributions we have made in Jesus’ name?”¹³

(~ Fellowship Bible Church, Little Rock, Arkansas)



WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT THE CHURCH?



DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SERVANTS

The COS process also revealed some perceptions of the Church and our role in community. While our questionnaires did not specifically ask questions in this regard, this is what we learned:

How were we received?

During the course of this Community Opportunity Scan, most of the people interviewed were enthusiastic about the idea of churches coming together to better understand our community and its people. Community leaders and agencies welcomed our involvement and our desire to join the dialogue, looking for ways to improve our town. We were further encouraged when the Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) officially endorsed the COS initiative and voted to support collaboration in the future.



What is our current role as churches in our community?

Churches are involved in service projects and programs, and are contributing to a variety of local causes. There are individuals in the churches reaching into the community, offering their time, talents and gifts. New relationships are forming across church denominations, as members are realizing benefits of working together.

Generally speaking though, as individuals and congregations, we aren't well informed with respect to initiatives that exist outside of our immediate areas of interest or our social groups. Consequently, we don't really know where or how we can be most effective. When the COS team was invited to the Community Stability Forum and the bigger picture of the needs in our community were discussed by the 30 community leaders in attendance, we were alerted both to the scope and urgency of needs as well as the number of initiatives that already exist. Overall, we were taken aback by our lack of awareness.

How is the church perceived?

Although most interview comments were very positive, some inferences made about hurts and resentments were directed at the Church or toward Christianity in general. There are people who see us as condescending, hypocritical, or willing to "give handouts but not handshakes," offering our money but not ourselves in relationship. Our programs are often inward focused and do little to welcome non-Christians.

With respect to the Church's reputation in the community, one of the pastors interviewed said the following:

"Churches have failed to truly cooperate with one another, even to the point where some have spoken out against other churches, creating disunity among the believing community. This is incredibly detrimental to the community as it just confirms their suspicions of the untrustworthiness of believers and churches alike. However, I'm quick to add, that we are seeing a greater degree of cooperation than we have seen in recent history, and I am optimistic of the future."

What did we learn as COS team members?

Our COS team members have grown relationally and spiritually. Respecting denominational differences, we have learned from one another. We began as individuals with a common objective, and became friends and partners with a vision far beyond ourselves, far beyond our expectations. The team attended seminars and events that informed and inspired interest in new initiatives. And several ministries and programs have either started or been strengthened alongside the timeline of COS. The role of our prayer team has been vital. The evidence that God has led this process is undeniable.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM OTHERS?

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SERVANTS

During the course of our study, we happened to come across churches in other areas, mobilized and engaged in community partnerships. TrueCity in Hamilton, Ontario, Unite! in Atlanta, Georgia, Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas and MICAH, in Markham, Ontario have all formed unique church networks, enhancing their effectiveness and dramatically influencing their cities.

TrueCity

"Congregations throughout the city of Hamilton understand themselves to be integrally and essentially connected with each other as part of the one mission of God. They celebrate each other; sharing people, money, buildings, leaders, ideas and experience to promote God's loving intentions there. Congregations partner in training leaders and forming disciples who explore together ways of engaging communities with the Gospel. Congregants and leaders work together with those from other congregations in missional efforts throughout the city."¹⁴

Unite!

"During their first weekend of service in October 2003, over 30 churches joined forces to witness to their community, putting their faith into action. During the same weekend event in 2008, Unite! Churches joined with Hands on Atlanta and Gwinett Great Days of Service to mobilize more than 30,000 volunteers serving in more than 500 service projects, sharing the love of Jesus to those in need."¹⁵

Fellowship Bible Church

"The real gift was not what our churches gave away, but what we, the church of Jesus Christ, experienced...a new and positive connection with our community and a new sense about ourselves."¹⁶

MICAH – Markham Interchurch Committee for Affordable Housing

MICAH is a 17-church collective that develops affordable-housing projects in Markham and advocates at various levels of government around this cause.

"We have built two projects in Markham: Water Street Non-Profit Homes for Seniors and Robinson St. Non-Profit Homes. We serve on Regional and Town task forces and advocate at all levels for affordable housing. We now have an allocation from the Region under the current AHP (Affordable Housing Program) to build a third apartment building, East Markham Non-Profit Homes."¹⁷

What can we learn from these churches and how they are impacting their communities?

Fellowship Bible Church employed a five step strategy by asking themselves these questions:



- ? What are our unique strengths as a church...
- ? What are the critical issues of our community...
- ? Which of those can our church effectively influence...
- ? Do we have a structure that can move our people to those needs...
- ? Are we willing to commit resources, staff and people to make an impact...¹⁸

If we were to apply these steps to the Church here in Simcoe, the first two steps have now been completed by the Community Opportunity Scan. Are we at the stage of asking how we as the Church, can most effectively be an irresistible influence in our community? Do we need to develop a structure to mobilize the Church? What might that structure look like? Are we willing to commit resources and people to carry it out?

A wider definition of prosperity is the organized capacity to care for people.¹⁹

-Maureen Geddes



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER



COS studies conducted in other cities were carried out by individual churches looking for ways to better serve their neighbourhoods. When the local ministerial fellowship envisioned a COS study in Simcoe however, they had a vision for the opportunity that exists in bringing together the diversity of interests, gifts and resources inherent in the churches collectively. The potential to heighten the effectiveness of “the Church at Simcoe” is found in this: **the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.**



HOW...

The COS team sees a golden opportunity, an **overarching opportunity** to effectively facilitate all of the other opportunities discovered in this process, to best match our resources with needs, and to channel the cooperative care of the churches into the heart of our community.

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SERVANTS

HOW CAN WE TOUCH THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY ?

- by reaching out one individual to another, befriending neighbours, touching lives personally, caring in meaningful ways.
- by listening to those in need, taking an active interest in their lives, with no strings attached and no agenda or expectation.
- by discovering how to support existing initiatives and new opportunities.
- by directing the Church’s volunteer and financial efforts where they are needed most.
- by participating in community forums, task forces and think tanks, and becoming a voice in the political arena.
- by searching out, developing and maintaining workable partnerships in our community.
- by responding to invitations to community events (like Mental Health Day), parades and festivals.
- by taking a proactive role in initiating a community focus on root cause.
- by valuing the community as a foundation for serving.
- by loving people in our community the way that Jesus loves.

HOW CAN WE WORK COOPERATIVELY AS CHURCHES ?

- by joining together in unity, fostering compassion and kindness, fueling trust and commitment for the long term.
- by inviting people to a choice of outreach activities that cross over denominational involvement (i.e. options could be displayed at an annual Outreach Opportunities Fair).
- by getting behind an annual Church-led “We Believe in Simcoe Day”.
- by releasing gifts, creativity and potential through cross pollination of ideas.
- by coordinating our resources so they are allocated and used more efficiently.
- by humbly speaking out on matters of social injustice.
- by creating awareness and establishing communication channels that would convey information among churches in a more timely and accurate way.
- by coming together for events, times of worship, fellowship, ministry training, etc.
- by praying together for the Church and community.
- by simply and truly living our faith, so that hurting people can see that the real Source of healing is Jesus.

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY



DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SERVANTS

MIGHT A NETWORK BE THIS GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY ?

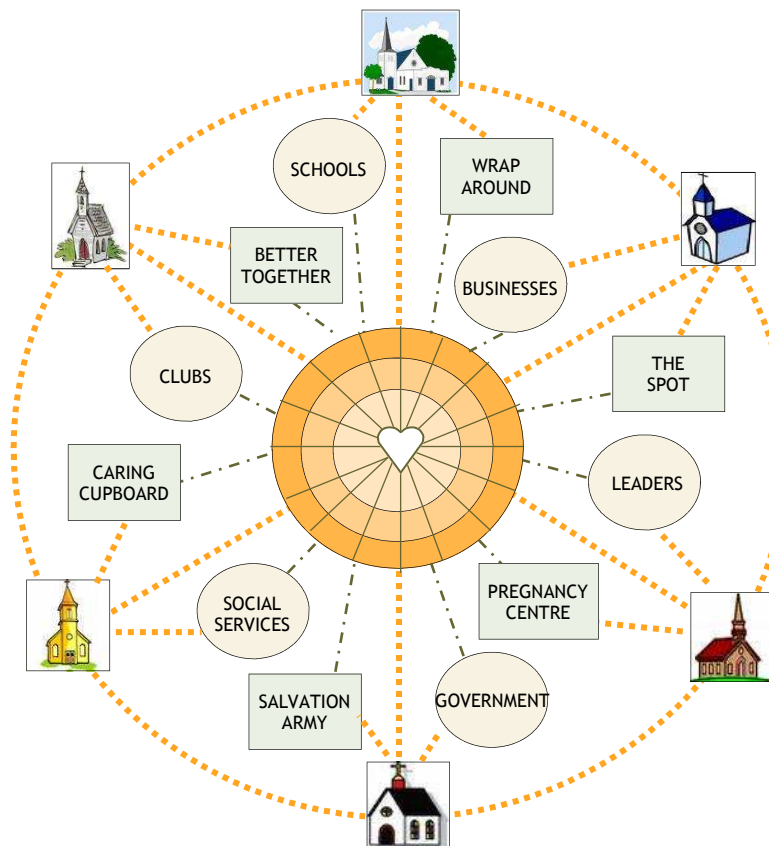
The COS team has identified the need for the 'Church at Simcoe' to organize its capacity to serve the vision of working cooperatively in the community. A **network** would be ...

- ✓ ... a **means** by which the Church would operate its multi-faceted ministry
- ✓ ... a **conduit** that turns desires and ideas into plans of action, enabling and empowering the limitless possibilities that exist within the churches
- ✓ ... a **structure**, that is tangible, stable, efficient and sustainable
- ✓ ... a communication **link** between the churches and the community
- ✓ ... a **stimulus**, that stirs churches to join hands and hearts
- ✓ ... a **vehicle**, that moves forward the findings in this report
- ✓ ... a **model**, that displays servant leadership with integrity
- ✓ ... a **body**, that lives and expresses the **unity** of the Church

WHAT...

WHAT MIGHT THIS NETWORK LOOK LIKE?

This graph shows the **interconnecting paths of a network** ...
... churches working together to gather around and support the community and its agencies, partners, and programs to serve the people in our town.



BENEFITS OF A NETWORK



WHY...

From the outset of this COS process, the mandate has been to explore ways that the churches could be more of a blessing in our community. What we discovered however, was that there exists a golden opportunity for churches to work together to form a church network that would offer collaborative benefits, as follows:

- by joining together in prayer for the Church and community, God's power is released.
- by speaking with one voice, the Christian faith community gains credibility to participate in community forums, taskforces and planning meetings, enabling the Church to make meaningful contributions in the political arena.
- by showing a unified face to the community, we become a stronger witness of our faith in action.
- by stepping out in a coordinated fashion, we can allocate our human and financial resources more efficiently, meeting more of the needs in our town with the resources we have been given.
- by establishing communication channels within a network, awareness of current needs and initiatives will be heightened so that people can respond in relevant and timely ways.
- by establishing a method to track and share information about local services and initiatives, we can perform a coordination function that is currently missing in our community, one that would help to more effectively match resources with specific needs.
- by bringing people together to train, nurture and develop gifts and interests of people in the churches, we will be better equipped to serve our community to our full God-given potential.
- by forming a network we organize our collective capacity to minister to our community:
 - strategically, with purpose, to proactively target every area of need identified as a theme in this COS report
 - with sustainability not dependant on individual churches or people
 - magnifying the scope and impact of town-wide events and initiatives exponentially

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The potential impact of a network in our community is huge. While the task may seem daunting, in reality the seeds for implementation have been planted. God has already laid the foundation and is aligning people to accomplish His work in our town.

- links with community leaders, businesses, schools, social service agencies and clubs are being established.
- several community forums are welcoming a voice of the faith community at their tables.
- pastors are gathering monthly at ministerial fellowship meetings to connect, build relationships, share common concerns and opportunities for collaboration.
- new and existing outreach ventures, involving individual church members and teams, are proving to be valuable.
- several churches are growing in unity and working well together.

The challenge currently before us then, is simply to:

- build on the current momentum
- communicate and share this vision
- encourage more people to participate
- and develop the strategy of a network.

“We’re here to be light, bringing out the God colours in the world.
He is putting us on a light stand, now... SHINE!”²⁰

- Matthew 5:14-15



CONCLUDING REMARKS

BELIEVING

CONCLUDING REMARKS



"As I look back over the last year and a half, I see God's fingerprints all over COS. Personally, I have repeatedly seen Him provide the resources we need when we need them. He has been opening unexpected doors before us that we just needed to walk through. Experiencing these things has kept me passionate, motivated and believing that there's so much more to this COS cause than what I originally thought."

-COS team member

The possibilities for better serving our community are endless, limited only by our faith and humility, our imaginations and our willingness to step through the open doors of opportunity that God has set before us.

*You see things and say, "Why?"
But I dream things that never were and say, "Why not?"²¹
~ George Bernard Shaw*

We believe that it takes more than education, healthcare, and social programs to make the difference in helping the community escape discouragement and poverty. We believe the difference is the gospel of Jesus Christ and His love for us.

*If you gotta start somewhere, why not here
If you gotta start sometime, why not now
If we gotta start somewhere, I say here
If we gotta start sometime, I say now
Two worlds collide in a beautiful display
We are one choice from together ... we are family²²
~ "City on Our Knees" by Toby Mac*

When the Church is the hands and feet of Jesus,
His love makes all the difference in the world.

*"Love each other as if your life depended on it.
Love makes up for practically anything.
Be quick to give a meal to the hungry,
a bed to the homeless—cheerfully.
Be generous with the different things God gave you,
passing them around so all get in on it:
if words, let it be God's words;
if help, let it be God's hearty help.
That way, God's bright presence will be evident
in everything through Jesus,
and He'll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything
—encores to the end of time.
Oh, yes!²³
~ 1 Peter 4:7-11*



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END NOTES

FOOTNOTES

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