

Dear friends,

As we begin 2010 I want to take a few minutes and say a word of thanks on your behalf to those folks who work so tirelessly in giving leadership through the offering of their time and talents here as we live and grow Grace!

When I think of the clergy team we are blessed with, words fail! I am thrilled with our Grace clergy team who together are rich and diverse group. It is a joy to gather and celebrate God's infinite love for us. Edmund, Janet, Ted, and Don are an exciting team. *Evenings with Grace* are continuing as does our daytime Bible Study. We have a new *Lenten Study* which is a timely reflection on the future of church and a daytime study on *Women of Faith*. *Eating the Scroll* independent Bible study branches out into new areas yet again this Lent; and there are movie nights to name just a few of the offerings! We are blessed in the diversity and gifts of our clergy team!

What a great team of Churchwardens we have with Mike, Cindy, Carolyn, Kerrie and Lisa and our emeritus Dave. I am thrilled that this dedicated team continues intact and augmented into 2010. We meet regularly and cover so much ground in those meetings. We celebrate God's blessings in this place! I want to thank Anne for her tireless dedication. Have we ever entered the 21st century! Enews, power points, and charm flow out from the office like a river! Thank you Anne for your faithfulness, dedication, graciousness, and hard work!

I also want to thank Patrick for his energetic and enthusiastic work as our organist and choir director. Patrick continues to inspire us with his playing. The senior choir continue to enrich our worship and over this past year have developed a new and particularly blended voice that we look forward to hearing. The last anthem took our breath away.

The clear tones of our children's choir adds much to the enthusiasm of our worship with their wide ranging repertoire and we are grateful to Janet, Mary Lue and the parents for making this possible! Janet, and sometimes Mary Lue or Patrick, along with Chris, Paul and Laura and our weekly choir volunteers continue to provide lively Spirit filled music at our 9:15 a.m. worship! Our servers are great! Jocelyne and our Altar Guild make sure all is ready to celebrate God's

Grace. Our Lay Readers are fantastic and share in the leadership of virtually every liturgy of the week regardless of the day or time! Our Readers and Chalice bearers are a blessing as they share in the message of Hope, our Lay Anointers call upon us the healing touch of God as does our dedicated Parish Nurse, Jean Hoover. Our Lay Visitors bring hope!

Cathy Toyonaga is a continual gift to our becoming God's children with her vision and hard work as Sunday School Co-ordinator. Cathy is completing her term of service as coordinator this year and there is no way we can ever give appropriate thanks to her for coordinating the relaunch of the Sunday School in 2004!!

I want to thank Sheri Krauss for her leadership in our pre-school program and am thrilled to announce that Sheri has agreed to be the Coordinator of the full Sunday School in September! I particularly want to thank all those folks who volunteered to join the Sunday School team just prior to Christmas!!! Our mission here in Markham is to reach out and welcome people. We are grateful to Cathy and Sheri and all the Sunday School volunteers and especially to Maxine for heading things up this Spring!

I want to thank our caretaker Steve for his diligence in the care of our facility. As uses expand so does his care. If you need him just ask him!! We appreciate the dedication of Jean our Envelope Secretary. We are also all grateful for the hard work of our treasurer Phyllis! Fantastic job - She was the Herald of glad tidings AGAIN this past December!

I also want to thank everyone who serves on our many various committees and organizations! There are so many of you that make the programs of Grace run so effectively. There is ACW, Advisory Board, Affordable Housing Committee, our Auditor, the Baden Powell Leaders, the Emergency Preparedness Committee, Jack White and the Cemetery Committee, Communications Committee, our *Faithworks* chair Susan, Dave and Dave and the Festival Committee, Finance Committee, Grounds Crew and Gardeners, Health Cabinet, Lunch with Grace and Outreach Committee, the Nominating Committee, the Prayer Chain, the Screening Team under the direction of Ginny Bidwell, the Winchesters, not to mention our power point operators, Rick and the Sidespersons and greeters. This year of particular note, we offer our thanks to one of our first Volunteer Award recipients, Phyllis Tyrie, as she completes her

term as catering coordinator with her new and expanding family commitments. I particularly want to thank Dave Ashley and Rogers Gardham and the entire *Living and Growing Grace Fully* Group for their strategizing and hard work.

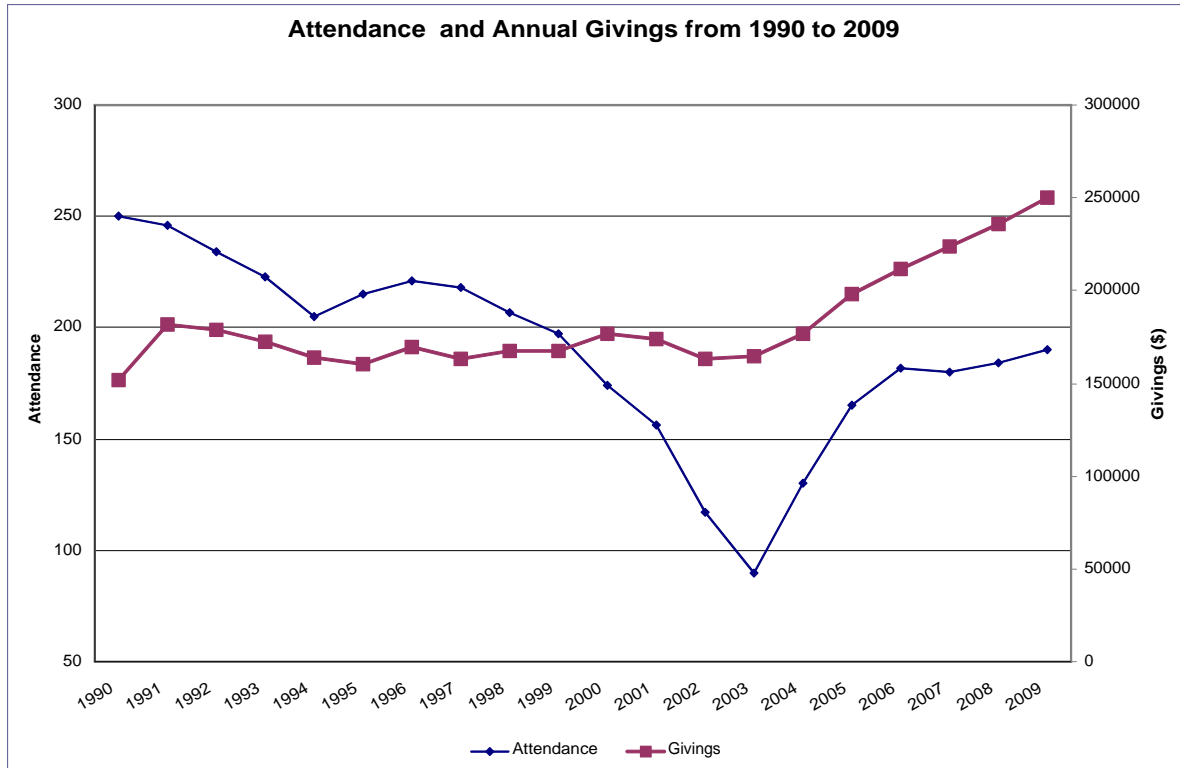
Special thanks are due to Bill Jennings and the parents involved with the *Youth Lounge*. It is really a *Fresh Expression* of faith in the lives of our youth as they have a safe place to come and to be in God's Grace!

Our hall does not just happen to be set up magically for our 9:15 worship! Special thanks go to Dave Smith and the Altar Guild for the week by week set up! It takes time to build a new congregation and I want to thank Deborah and Cindy for looking after the coffee each week as Louie and Stevie do for 10:15! Finally, I want to thank Myron and Dave for all their pictures of the Living and Growing life of Grace! The photos continue to thrill and delight!

So many people working to build up the Body of Christ in this place and proclaim the Good News of God's love to all! Each is a vital part of the whole. As we celebrate this Sunday we highlight the dedication of so many!

We come to Grace to BELONG to God, to celebrate our BELIEF that Jesus loves and cherishes each of us, and to continue in our journeys of BECOMING the children of God. As we make this journey we meet fellow travellers on the way. We reach out to each with a radical welcome and radical hospitality so that we may, in the words of St. Benedict, "Greet each Guest as Christ himself."

So how are we doing??? Lets look at some graphics.



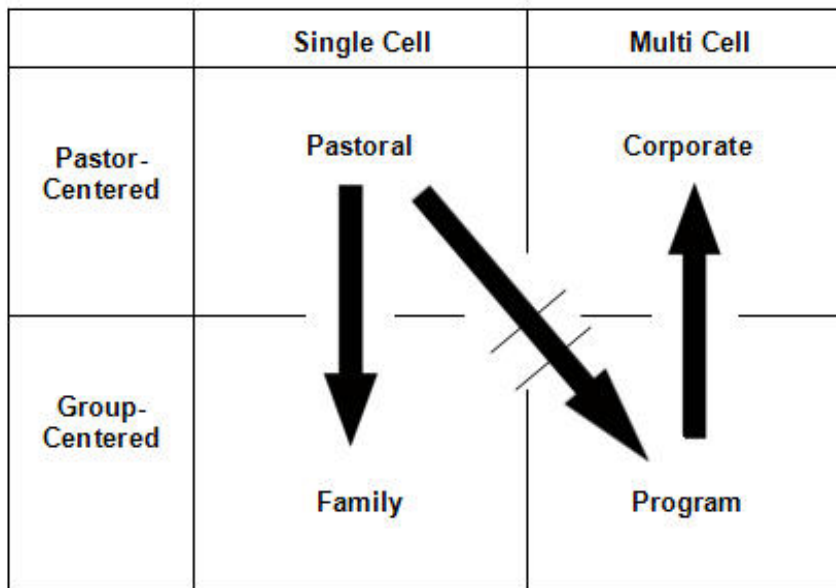
This chart has some alarming and also some pleasing lines! But, before we go into that, a little background.

There are different sizes of churches and the different sizes have different dynamics. There are Family Churches (50 people per Sunday), Pastoral Churches (50 - 150 people per Sunday), Program Churches (150 - 400), and Corporate Churches (400). Family and Pastoral churches are single cell organisms. That means that the life of the church community focuses around an individual such as a matriarch in a family church, or the pastor in the pastoral church. Program and larger churches are multi-celled units. Parish life focuses around key programs where lay and clergy leaders share key roles. Such parishes have much more going on and no one is really able to know everyone. We relate to each other through our programs and committees (which are the different building blocks of the parish) and ultimately through our worship and celebrations. Pastoral and Corporate Churches are pastor centred while Program and Family Churches are group centred. There are similarities and differences between sizes and dynamics!

It is not too difficult for a church to cross one axis but it is much more challenging to move across both axis at once. It is very challenging to move from a Pastoral Church to a Program Church. This is where we live. It is an exciting place in an exciting time!

The N-Curve

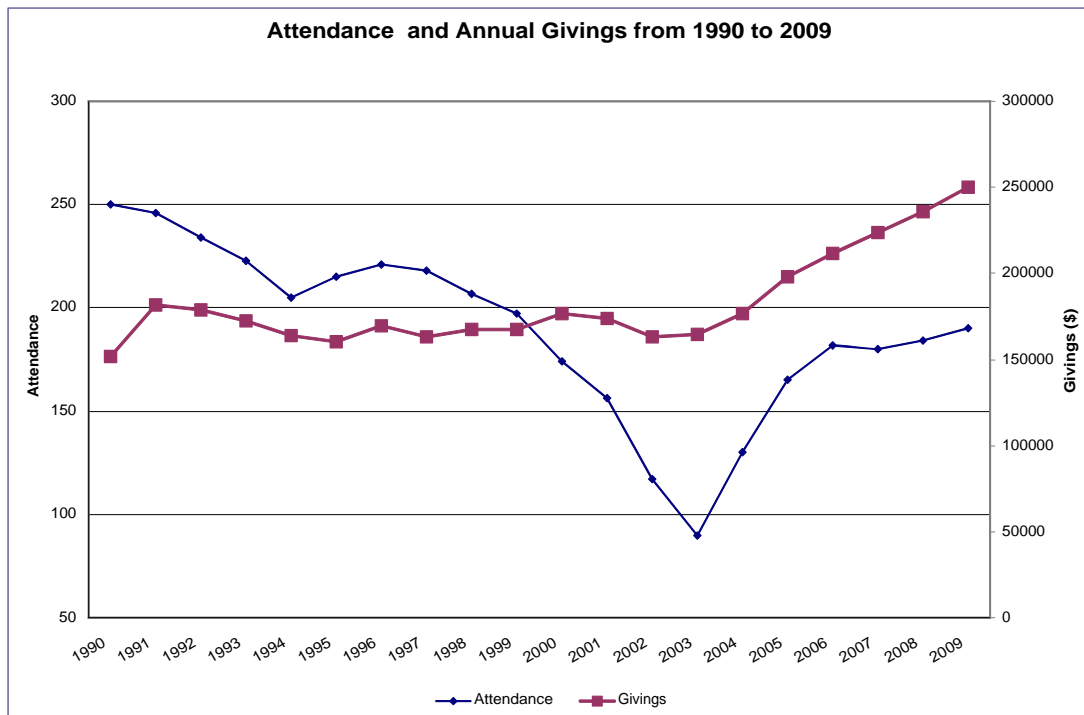
Alice Mann, The In-Between Church



Where do we actually fit in on the N Chart?? Grace has grown from being a mid sized Pastoral Church to be a Program Church with all its richness and diversity. Average Sunday attendance in 2003 was something less than 100. By 2009 we had grown all the way to 190 people per Sunday on average throughout the year. This is more than double in a few short years. Every Sunday you are here it Counts as we celebrate God's love!!

Let's look at the Grace Growth chart again. It is interesting that when he was here recently Archdeacon David Peasgood left the growth charts from the 1950's to the 1970's. Such tools are not new!! I draw your attention to several things. There are two things charted here. *Average Sunday attendance from 1990 to 2009* and *parish givings* for the same time frame. You will see the correlation. The increase in givings mirrors our increased attendance. Also we have been working at the 1% solution where we look at our givings over the previous year

and see if we as individuals can raise them 1%. As we grow it means more people are a part of our life. More people come to events such as the Christmas Bazaar. Let's look at the Average Sunday attendance.



The steep decline at the start of the decade was precipitous! The words “slippery slope” come to mind. We also see a rapid increase starting in 2004. The slope is no less “slippery” but we are going in the opposite direction. Alban Institute would call the us a “turn-around” Church. But it is always easy to fall back. It is easy to forget to offer a radical welcome. It is easy to become comfortable and to forget to be outreaching to the neighbourhood. We are called to welcome!

In 2006 we basically reached capacity. Our seating capacity in this space using the modern standards for “personal space” is about 130 people. We start to feel stuffed when we are that many. It becomes a challenge for families to come and sit together at 10:15. It is off putting for newcomers! You can see we started to level off in 2006. We were full. Our response as a parish was to adjust our times; to put ourselves out so that we could be outreaching to our community. We added something different. We added our *Eucharist in the Round* which is a

different way to celebrate God's Grace in an informal way with contemporary music. We gather in a circle and our time lines are more streamlined for 21st century living. No one has time to spare. We offer worship and praise in a way that enables people to celebrate God's love and also meet their other commitments and responsibilities. It takes time to start to build a new congregation. We see here the first hints of the new growth at Grace. It is an exciting time!

The popular praise music that we use at 9:15 a.m. is part of the wave of Christian music that is touching people's hearts all over the world today! It touches our hearts and it is essential that it is here at Grace. I am particularly thrilled by the way the 9:15 has been remodeled to better meet our worship needs. It is a great space! We have a new screen for the worship, a new Altar, and a completely new focus! It is an exciting new beginning for 2010! There is also the 8:15 early Communion which has been a fixture of Anglican worship for centuries. Different expressions of God's Grace as we gather to celebrate!

I was struck by a reflection by Fr. Don. He quoted, Dominican Priest, Albert Nolan who states, "Most of us live in the past or the future. We are distracted by what has happened yesterday. Our feelings and our thoughts dwell upon what happened recently or sometimes what happened long ago. We...romanticize the past (the good ole days,") or live in the future, in the world (we) hope to have one day..."

Neither the past nor the future really exists. All we have is this present moment. The energy we spend worrying about the past or imagining what awful things the future holds for us takes away from the passion of the present moment – the moment that we truly have.

God is gracious and loving and we give joyful thanks that not only do we *BELONG* to God, but that we are *BECOMING* God's Children!

We come with Joy!! We come to celebrate God's love!!

Thanks be to God!!

Canon John A Read