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## **National Places of Faith Roundtable 2009**

Organized by the Ontario Heritage Trust in  
collaboration with the Heritage Canada Foundation  
September 24 2009, 10:15-5:00 p.m.  
Enoch Turner House, Toronto

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### **Executive Summary**

**There is a need for:**

#### **Strategies and Case Studies**

- Examples and success stories to be shared amongst the heritage, faith and planning communities in order to foster creative thinking about reuse
- Dissemination of information on the management of properties and how a local community can take over a church or parish.
- Ethical standards to increase the knowledge of adaptive-reuse appropriateness
- Integration of “green” or eco-friendly perspectives for future strategies.

#### **Education and Training**

- University teaching and training programs on the management and evaluation of heritage properties.
- The importance of the Ontario Places of Worship online inventory for research, strategic planning and reference.
- Lack of an electronic manual or workbook on religious properties (specifically related to adaptive reuse strategies).
- Need for a book publication to report the current status of the situation.

#### **Community Responsibilities**

- Greater understanding of the building for the broader community.
- Continued stewardship of heritage places in order to ensure their survival and growth and the importance of future planning for significant religious buildings.
- Lack of human resources, manpower and community involvement
- Owners have to acknowledge the need for some closures, but proceed carefully with the input from stakeholders.

## Barriers to Address

- Church adaptations for residential use are challenging projects that are slow to materialize due to controlled laws and guidelines for development.
- The religious heritage of a sacred building needs to be integrated within the overall planning process to ensure the successful longevity of the building.
- No funds to support conservation and limited external funding is available
- Abandonment of historic central churches for newer and larger facilities located outside urban centres.

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*Guided tour of Little Trinity and St. Paul's Basilica by Edwin Rowse, Stephen Pearson, Carlos Nunes and Charles Hazell*

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## Participants:

### Meeting Sponsor:

Luc Noppen, Canadian Forum for Public Research on Heritage (CFPRH)

### Meeting Minutes:

Nicole Sammut, Heritage Canada Foundation (HFC)

[nicolesammut@gmail.com](mailto:nicolesammut@gmail.com)

### Presenters (in order of appearance):

- Richard Moorhouse, Executive Director, Ontario Heritage Trust
- Natalie Bull, Executive Director, Heritage Canada Foundation
- Luc Noppen, Institut du Patrimoine, UQAM (Universite du Quebec a Montreal)  
Coordinator of the Canadian Forum for Public Research on Heritage
- Robert Jaeger, Executive Director, Partners for Sacred Places
- Sean Fraser, Ontario Heritage Trust Manager of Acquisitions and Conservation Services
- Reverend Monsignor Bradley H. Massman, St. Paul's Basilica
- Carlos Nunes, Fine Arts Conservator, Roman Catholic Diocese
- Charles Hazell, Conservation Architect, Taylor Hazell Architects
- Scott Barrett, Senior Coordinator, Heritage Preservation Services, City of Toronto
- Malcolm Thurlby, Professor of Visual Arts, York University
- Bruce Pappin, Volunteer with the Building & Property Committee of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pembroke
- Reverend Nil A. Guillemette, Pastor of four parish churches, Diocese of Pembroke
- Allan Avis, Conservation Architect, Allan Avis Architects Inc., Goderich
- Marcus Letourneau, Heritage Planner, City of Kingston
- Laura Hatcher, Planner, Ontario Heritage Trust
- Louise McGugan, Architect, Barry Padolsky Architects

- Robert Mitchell, Builder and Developer, Mitchell Associates
- Sharon Vattay, Historian, Goldsmith Borgal and Company Ltd., Architects, Associate

## Introduction

Richard Moorhouse, Executive Director, Ontario Heritage Trust

Welcome participants. This session was organized by the Ontario Heritage Trust in collaboration with the Heritage Canada Foundation to explore the issues we are facing with preserving religious heritage properties.

## Cross Country Check up

Natalie Bull, Executive Director, Heritage Canada Foundation

Natalie Bull opened discussion by noting that every decade seems to bring to light a new building typology at risk due to economic, technological or social forces: railway stations in the 1980s, lighthouses in the 1990s, and now historic places of faith. She stressed the importance of identifying shared goals in the heritage of faith issue, and moving through this era of sweeping societal change in a collaborative and productive way to achieve sustainable results.

Natalie summarized the challenges identified at last year's Endangered Places of Faith Roundtable meeting held at the Heritage Canada Foundation conference in Quebec City, and reported on developments since then. The issues included:

- Acceleration of church closures due to dwindling congregations and re-configuration of dioceses, and in some cases due to the merging of several congregations into a larger (and sometimes a newly constructed ) facility, and the challenge to find new owners and new appropriate uses.
- High operation and maintenance costs that overwhelm small congregations or potential new owners – in some cases exacerbated by deferred maintenance and lack of technical expertise available.
- Development pressure and high land values creating the temptation to sell church properties for development.
- Barriers to adaptive re-use, such as in the case of cemeteries.

In Quebec City there was a clear expression of the need for national collaboration and exchange of ideas, and recognition that faith groups and institutions that own religious buildings must be engaged in an ongoing dialogue to create solutions that are mutually acceptable and beneficial.

This meeting here in Toronto is designed to be another milestone along that path.

There have been a number of meetings across the country on this subject over the last 5-10 years, most recently a June 2009 seminar in Quebec City organized by UQAM's Heritage Institute and the Canadian Forum for Public Research in Heritage. Two upcoming conferences will be held in October 2009, *Religious Houses: A Legacy* (Montreal and Quebec City) and *La sauvegarde du patrimoine religieux* (New Brunswick).

Inventories are important to understand the scope and nature of the building stock. The *Conseil du Patrimoine religieux du Quebec* established a Places of Faith inventory in 2003-2004. This inventory lists 2,751 places of faith built before 1975. At the same time, a Heritage Assessment was completed of buildings constructed before 1945. The Ontario Heritage Trust recently launched a comprehensive online inventory while other inventories have been initiated in Newfoundland, Alberta and Nova Scotia.

In the area of funding, the *Conseil du Patrimoine religieux du Quebec* continues to be the gold standard, providing substantial funding for up to 100 projects per year. Many provinces report that any heritage funding program they have in place is generally being heavily subscribed by applications for assistance from places of faith, often for essential work like roofing.

Resources and tools for information and education surrounding places of faith have also been developed. Following the HCF Quebec City Roundtable, the listserv Spero-L was launched as another resource that encourages dialogue. Spero-L is a free email discussion tool regarding places of faith at risk in Canada. Currently the listserv has 135 members and the numbers continue to grow. The OHT's website, Ontario's Places of Faith, provides important contextual information and research on the history of religion in Ontario and the history of major faith groups. The organization *Faith and the Common Good* provides resource kits for faith groups interested in integrating sustainability into their operations and practices. Case studies of adaptive re-use are being shared through these and other means.

Finally, Natalie urged participants to use this venue as an opportunity for ongoing dialogue that will enable us to build information, resources and our understanding of the issues surrounding endangered places of faith.

Luc Noppen, Institut du Patrimoine, UQAM (Universite du Quebec a Montreal) Coordinator of the Canadian Forum for Public Research on Heritage

Luc Noppen discussed the current status of religious heritage in Quebec. Unlike some provinces and territories, there is an optimistic view in Quebec concerning religious heritage because of the amount of public funds being made available. For example, \$60 million is spent per year in grants on religious heritage in Quebec. The *Conseil du Patrimoine religieux* is able to spend about \$20 million, sponsoring one hundred restoration projects per year while the Ministry of Culture raises funds to support additional projects. While the government funds religious heritage, their involvement reduces the amount of private funding.

There is a general consensus that not every religious building can be saved but that they should be converted for community use rather than for private use. The larger issue concerns the local community. If they do not get involved in the church project, the building will not survive. Churches do not need

“heritage protection;” zoning by laws are effective enough for protecting the building and its future usefulness.

Community neighbourhood facilities are not expensive conversion projects for church buildings. A community takes over a church and raises funds to build kitchens and equipment. They will also find money to help maintain the building. On the other hand, cultural conversions are very expensive. The average theatre or library conversion costs six to eight million dollars. In addition, cultural conversions look for newer churches for adaptive reuse. Churches built in the 1880’s are costly to adapt the building to a new use. Also, more and more churches are being transformed into sports facilities. These conversion projects are supported by local governments. On the other hand, private housing projects are not solutions in Quebec. People are fighting these projects because it converts churches into private spaces.

Another issue in Quebec right now is the closing of big convents. This problem will be addressed at the upcoming conference in Montreal and Quebec, *Religious Houses: A Legacy*. What will be the memory and the interpretation of the history and culture of the Grey Nuns in Quebec once the chapel has closed down? Who will recall the Grey Nuns and their imprint in history in the next fifty years when they are gone? What makes a convent if the religious chapel is absent and all that remains is residential? At Laval University a complex inventory has been initiated on religious immaterial heritage. This includes small objects needed in convents, chapels and seminaries. The questions still remain; who are we keeping these objects for and who needs them?

There is also a similar issue with cemeteries. The more full a cemetery is, the more it becomes a park. A park with no more burials becomes public property. No one can maintain and operate a cemetery without the revenue from new burials.

What is needed for the future of religious heritage is dissemination of information on successful projects and new uses. A library for example is not an economic way to save a church and it cannot be a solution for all the churches in Quebec. Information on the management of properties and how a local community can take over a church or parish should be made available to the public. There is also a need for training all over Quebec. The *Conseil du Patrimoine religieux* is putting together two seminars a year in different regions on university teaching and training programs as well as long distance training on the management, characterization and evaluation of heritage properties. Of course the best solution for a church is for it to stay open as a place of worship; this option is difficult when revenue funds are not available to maintain church buildings.

## **Discussion**

*Formerly church and state are separate. Is there is a shift towards involving public entities in church management, ownership, and funding?*

- Luc Noppen: We’re not talking about a church with the big “C,” we are talking about heritage. The goal is to maintain these buildings in the name of public interest and history. Churches are important heritage monuments in Canada.

*Are there any programs in Quebec that assess which buildings can be saved, and which cannot? Who determines what will be preserved or demolished?*

- Luc Noppen: The *Conseil du Patrimoine religieux* created an inventory in order to evaluate church buildings. The best buildings receive funding no matter their religious denomination.

These evaluations are not final and can be discussed. If a church is taken over by the local community, there are more chances to save it and to find funding for the building. The best case is to have the community take on the building and become involved in its future.

## Preserving Sacred Places and their Value to the Community

Robert Jaeger talked about his role and the role of *Partners for Sacred Places* in America. This is a non-profit organization that helps small congregations avoid closing or dismembering their church building. With the right resources and help, small congregations may be able to not only survive, but thrive. Today church attendance and funding is on the decline, yet the church is not just a place of worship but a community space. In the example of Calvary United Methodist Church in West Philadelphia, the space is not only used as a worship centre (it is currently occupied by four congregations including Methodist, Jewish, Pentecostal and Mennonite faiths) but it holds offices for social service programs and is an arts and culture centre for music and theatre.

The *Partners for Sacred Places* approach promotes good use of churches, synagogues, meeting houses and temples, acting as a bridge between the preservation community and the religious community. The program helps congregations make the most of their buildings. They emphasize the survival of older buildings not only because they are more challenging but because they have accumulated cultural value within the community. Because a sacred space is more than a worship centre, when it serves the community it also helps increase the housing values of the surrounding neighbourhood, it reduces vacancy of buildings and strengthens the commercial districts within the area.

Jaeger discussed the possibilities and sources of funding for places of worship. The creation of non-profit groups within a religious building is essential. Congregations need to think about the space and condition of the building, what it has to offer, who they serve and who they *could* serve. This requires looking at a wide variety of donors and funding in order to help them sustain themselves in new ways. *The Partners for Sacred Places* program created a tool kit to enable congregations to tell the story of their church to potential donors. They also created the *New Dollars/New Partners* program.

### **Discussion**

*How can church leaders be convinced that the broader community (outside the congregation) should have a say in the fate of the church?*

- Robert Jaeger: The community is often drawn in much later in the conversation. It is important to involve the local stakeholders and not just the neighbours as early as possible.

*The Partners for Sacred Places research focuses on largely urban examples- how would your findings translate to a more rural case?*

- Robert Jaeger: Overall the approach of urban church buildings also applies to rural churches. In the United States a lot of rural congregations are hosting the same kinds of programs as urban churches. There is a difference of degree, but options and opportunities are transferrable between

urban, rural and suburban geographical locations. I also want to make note that the tools we provide are not for the dying church. You need effective leadership in order to proceed with reuse.

*Do you have any experience in working with properties in Canada?*

- Robert Jaeger: Our mission is to help properties in the United States, but similarities occur in other countries as well. For example, Canada, the United States and Britain use religious buildings for social outreach so the methodology is transferable.

*If there are many congregations in small areas, can anything be done to coordinate efforts?*

- Robert Jaeger: Most often these congregations work independently but they should consolidate their resources and share information and services. Small clusters of congregations can band together to provide services and raise funds. This is often more effective for gathering and stretching resources.

*Who identifies the heritage elements in the structure? Are you helping congregations identify the heritage significance of their church?*

- Robert Jaeger: The Partners for Sacred Places training involves visits by an architect and a condition assessment to help owners see the heritage value of their building. Consultants will often reduce their fees for non-profit organizations. The case statement and project plan is more efficient once the heritage preservation assessment is completed.

## Ontario Places of Worship

Sean Fraser demonstrated the significance and accessibility of the new Ontario Heritage Trust's online inventory on religious buildings in Ontario. The website not only provides information on buildings and faith communities, but information on architects, the history of religion in Ontario and the impact of faith groups and buildings within communities. Fraser identified the crisis and major shift in religious heritage and the need for a comprehensive inventory to understand the scope and totality of the project. The inventory helps establish a baseline of information for discussion in order to understand church closures and amalgamations.

The online inventory is a primary resource that identifies all buildings of faith and all traditions that are twenty five years or older. Unlike the inventory created by the *Conseil du Patrimoine religieux du Quebec*, the website does not evaluate sites but functions on getting raw information and content out and obtaining feedback from its users.

The Ontario Heritage Trust receives questions, concerns and content about religious properties. Information and updates are added on a daily basis with one hundred new entries added per week. Currently the website lists 1, 750 properties but they are expecting more in the future. This enables the inventory to be an online resource and an educational tool for the general public.

The website will not only be used for academic research but for understanding adaptive reuse. Information on current sacred buildings and former religious buildings will be available on the website. Successful and unsuccessful case study adaptations will be posted on the website in order to learn from past experiences. In addition to academic research, the website also aids in strategic capital planning, tourism and reference strategies. Future content, research and suggestions are encouraged to help build



pride within faith communities. The online inventory is available at:  
[www.heritagetrust.on.ca/placesofworship/default.aspx](http://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/placesofworship/default.aspx).

## Challenges and Perspectives within the Urban Environment: St. Paul's Basilica Case Study

Rev Monsignor Bradley H. Massman

Reverend Monsignor Bradley H. Massman identified the current issues at St. Paul's Basilica. The church is the mother parish of the arch diocese (1822). Built in the Italian Romanesque style, it is the site of the first Catholic cemetery and the home of the first archbishop of Toronto. The basilica still caters to a large and diverse immigrant congregation, encompassing thirty five different languages, but it is also the lowest income area of Toronto.

Monsignor Massman discussed the importance of social programs and the arts within the church. St. Paul's Basilica runs different service programs for the community, including a breakfast program for students. The church also strives to achieve funds through the arts. For instance, because of its European architectural features, St. Paul's attracts a number of filmmakers to its site since it is the only European looking church outside the walls of Rome. In addition, choir groups such as the Mendleson Choir and art exhibitions (Albanian Embassy) are welcomed and invited to use the space.

St. Paul's is rich in its diverse population and broad spectrum of immigrants. On a typical Sunday morning mass, 500-700 members will be present to hear service. The next challenge facing St. Paul's includes the redevelopment of Regent Park and the new condominium development in an old area downtown. The question remains, "How will these new developments impact the community at St. Paul's Basilica?"

Carlos Nunes, Fine Arts Conservator, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto

Carlos Nunes addressed the materials, technical skills and mechanics of working on St. Paul's Basilica. His job as a conservator is to bring balance to the surfaces within a building. In the case of St. Paul's, Nunes had to be sensitive to the types of materials he was working with (plaster, canvas and wood) but also sensitive to the location and history of the basilica for Roman Catholics.

In response to the technical skill, the conservators learn to understand the surfaces and the characteristics of those surfaces intimately. The interior pieces demonstrate the skill levels of the work found at St. Paul's Basilica. It is only from working closely with the surfaces that conservators are able to recognize the visual master plan and the organization of the images within the church.

The conservation work is a physically intensive undertaking. The workers started from the bottom up in order to become familiar with the mediate surface, its conditions, the colour palette and materials. Water damage was an issue within the basilica.

Another issue of concern was the replication of lost design. This limited the areas that could not be saved without over-stimulating the painting surface. The significance of this process is the longevity of the work once it is completed.



Charles Hazell, Conservation Architect, Taylor Hazell Architects

Charles Hazell talked about the different ways of interpreting sites and the fundamentals of successful buildings. Establishing strong relationships are at the core of every rich and vibrant catchment area. In the example of St. Paul's Basilica, they have done a successful job of identifying what is the character of its urban community and what are possible responses that are available on a social, cultural and religious basis. For St. Paul's, this is the nature of the urban experience, and its programme and mandate developed out of this. It gains humanity and relevance through this. Interpreting sites and sustaining buildings are critical components within the urban context. The mandate of the church and the ability for it to address its conservation and restoration needs are linked. This model is analogous to biogeography models relating natural species to minimum geographic area.

Priests that are charged with administering a parish vary in their ability to address building maintenance, conservation and restoration issues. This is understandable given their experience in such matters, sense of priorities, resource base and ability to relate their work to those outside of their faith base. Conservation requires identification of the mission of the church in the community, with the building as a resource and as a sacred trust. They may need training and support in order to appreciate and feel comfortable with their building and become an advocate for it.

The OHT Registry is an important tool in our efforts to conserve religious sites. Lists or cataloguing are an indication of loss, rarity, and risk. Many cultural, economic, and ecological systems are experiencing such conditions. We will address this challenge through sustainable models involving a higher level of collaboration. A culture of conservation is needed to find the means and enthusiasm to rekindle its love of architecture, space, and the environment. These relationships develop out of our abstract and tactile relationship with the world around us. In the example of St. Paul's and its conservation and restoration works, it has been successful because of its characteristic openness, and relevance to the community around it. Its architecture and what it does are inseparable.

Scott Barrett, Heritage Planner, City of Toronto

Scott Barrett addressed the larger issues of religious buildings from a city policy perspective. In the case of St. Paul's Basilica, the building has been restored and the changes are sensitive and thoughtful. Although St. Paul's is a success story, it addresses the larger concern facing religious buildings today; when it comes to conservation, not every church has the funds to restore a religious building to its former splendour.

Barrett identified three larger questions and concerns during his presentation. First, "How do we support these churches?" The lack of funds is an ongoing problem with religious buildings. Conserving and maintaining churches is always an issue. Money should be made available to religious buildings from the local, provincial and federal levels of government.

Secondly, "How do we protect these places?" Although the criteria for the conservation of churches would enable every church in the province to qualify, adequate methods of protection is required.

Finally, "When a church is no longer used by its congregation, how do we reuse the place?" St. Paul's Basilica has an ongoing use, yet when situations are no longer viable what happens? These

questions require partnership and collaboration. The database launched by Ontario Heritage Trust is a spectacular tool for detailed analysis to be carried out further and to see what is out there and what is important. There needs to be meaningful incentives to conserve religious buildings. The Property Tax Resource Program and the Grant Program do not benefit churches because religious buildings do not pay taxes and the grants are in modest sums. We need to collaborate and find meaningful incentives to fund the conservation of our community landmarks.

## **Discussion**

*St. Paul's' appears to be a success story, is it? What is the nature of its success and what has contributed to it?*

- Bradley H. Massman: It makes a great difference when you work with reasonable people. You end up saving a lot of money by working together. Creating a preventative maintenance schedule is essential within a church in order to keep the church up. We also have opened the church up culturally to different arts groups. Now the place is growing.
- Scott Barrett: The biggest success story goes beyond the conservation and restorative work. It is the appreciation that has grown in the place and the stewardship and maintenance. The most meaningful buildings are the ones we have to look after. There is an ongoing strategy and will because it has a place within the community”

*What are the technical issues you faced as an architect and conservator in the building in this point in time?*

- Charles Hazell: Building requires a sustained interest. It is unlike any other project. Architects are an important part of the support team and are looked upon for advice on many crucial and interrelated issues and this is a large older building of architectural sophistication. The team needs to keep each other informed, it is an integrated process.
- Carlos Nunes: There has to be continuous stewardship in a project like this. You also need general maintenance and air flow in order to make a religious building live again. Think through what it is you have to solve and understand the priorities of the building. We have to stay on top of the maintenance because the artworks are living objects.

*Does the successful restoration and continued investment on this landmark have detrimental impacts on heritage sites in the area or is it an inspiration?*

- Charles Hazell: There is still much to learn but I think it is a tremendous inspiration. It is a work in progress in changing times.
- Carlos Nunes: Sometimes conditions do repeat themselves but they were done by different hands and at different times. Constant maintenance is ongoing for all members of the project.

*What can St. Paul's' teach us about city building, urban life and the culture of the city?*

- Scott Barrett: The importance of investing time, energy and money into a neighbourhood that would otherwise be neglected. The pay back is pride and meaningful outreach in the area. St. Paul's is a beacon within a neighbourhood like that, contributing to a healthier city.

*How important is the beauty of the building to your congregants? Is it important to the sense of spirituality?*

- Bradley H. Massman: It's a combination of the history and beauty that attracts people. It also increases the regular congregation and the quality of the liturgy. There is a higher expectation of congregations and visitors.

*How could you disseminate the meaning of this building to make it available to all peoples and traditions?*

- Bradley H. Massman: We are very careful with how the building is used and respected in order to maintain a certain profile in the community.

*There is an aging infrastructure inside religious buildings; did you have to fall back on any grandfathering clauses? Do you have any insights on unreasonable demands by inspectors?*

- Charles Hazell: Our strategy was to prepare the building correctly by doing the pre-planning work so that when it comes time to refurbish the infrastructure, the ground work has been laid. This allows for long-term planning and quick response when the opportunity and funds come available. This is really responsible management or strategic planning, and it inspires confidence in others to see this taking place. They feel comfortable getting involved. There is no value in hiding from important realities. I find inspectors to be interested and in general supportive of this sort of work.
- Bradley H. Massman: We don't wait for the authority to start the assessment. We do all the groundwork and then take it to get assistance.
- Sean Fraser: The project demonstrates the importance of expertise and professional systems. The upfront and "right" planning creates immense savings in the long run.
- Charles Hazell: Planning has been helpful during and after the project. Architects often skip that stage or do not have the background to represent the heritage issues or sustainability issues. This has contributed to the problem. They have to catch up, serve the community and be generous.

### Small Town and Rural Perspectives

Malcolm Thurlby, Visual Arts Professor, York University

Malcolm Thurlby discussed the importance of rural churches within Ontario and the ambitious projects being undertaken by local communities. Small town and rural churches are not necessarily small buildings; on the contrary, many are constructed by big name architects from large towns. For example, in Chatham Ontario, Joseph Connelly was called in to build a Roman Renaissance church similar to St. Paul's Basilica in Toronto with the addition of twin towers in 1886. Other examples include Henry Langley's Lutheran church (1880s) and Thomas Fuller's church in Eastern Ontario (1860). The former church had a massive tower while the latter, an ambitious open timber roof.

In addition to building churches by well known architects, communities requested great churches on smaller scales, such as the great Anglican Church at Oxford Station (1880). The same situation occurs at Grafton, Ontario where Joseph Connelly built the Irish community a monumental Medieval Church with smaller proportions (1875).

Often with small towns there are a few examples of churches that can no longer function as sacred spaces. In the example of Middleport former Methodist Chapel in Paris, Ontario the building is now a museum. Also, in Consecon, Prince Edward County, a former church has been converted into a library. A Methodist Church in Richtown, Ontario was also going to be converted into a library but it was torn down before the project began. The church was built by Henry Langley.

In order to facilitate the study of rural churches, resources are critical for research. Robert Hill's online biographical dictionary of architects in Canada and the online inventory website are resources that will enhance our understanding of church heritage.

Bruce Pappin, Volunteer with the Building & Property Committee of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pembroke

Bruce Pappin presented the current issues of church closures within the diocese of Pembroke. At the advisory committee, the future of ten churches was unclear and no solution was brought to the attention of the council. From a heritage standpoint, the structures were simple and in poor condition. The decision was made for all of the structures to be torn down.

In addition to the rising number of church closures, communities are dwindling and the religious leaders are stretched for manpower. Firstly, congregations are moving about. There are some locations within Pembroke where the community no longer exists. One of the largest cathedral town communities serves 15,000 people. On the other hand, there is a shortage of priests within Pembroke. Today one priest is responsible for serving a number of different communities due to the lack of religious leaders.

One of the most important aspects in situations like these is to consult the people of faith in the communities. Some churches will be deconsecrated, especially when there is no economy or community left to support the building, but adaptive reuse is not always the solution. In Pembroke, they do not want to create sports facilities in former churches. It is important to approach the faith community for input and respect their future decision. Some groups who never step inside a church prefer to keep the building while some former parishioners may choose to demolish the space.

Finally Pappin discussed the future risk of religious heritage. Although religious heritage buildings of low value are being torn down now, the next phase of buildings will be more significant in heritage value. We need to start planning for this future challenge now because the loss of these buildings will make a great difference in our landscapes.

Rev Nil A Guillemette, Pastor of four Parishes in the Diocese of Pembroke

Reverend Nil A Guillemette discussed the current situation of religious orders within Eastern Canada. Pembroke is the only diocese that has parishes in two provinces. Today, six priests serve sixteen parishes in Quebec. Unlike Ontario, the regulations and demands are different; priests must be bilingual, yet there is a shortage of priests who can speak both French and English.

In addition, Guillemette belongs to the *Council du Patrimoine religieux du Québec*. The council is organized by regions, and each region has its own board. The responsibility of the board is to analyze the needs of a religious building and present them to the regional board. The board is composed of members of clergy of all denominations, expert historians, architects, archivists and those interested in heritage.

Currently there is a partnership between the denomination, the religious orders and the government to protect and serve the religious heritage for the future. This partnership does not only benefit heritage and tourism but it helps protect, conserve and preserve religious buildings. The Council also created a survey for all the churches in the province in 1995. The churches were classified as follows: A, uncontested as a heritage treasure, B, exceptional and C, superior.

Allan Avis, Conservation Architect, Allan Avis Architects Inc., Goderich

Allan Avis focused his discussion on the building structure, the building envelope and health and safety. The fundamental characteristic of churches is clear span space, with structural systems such as hammer beams (decorative wood frames below the ceiling), post and beam frames (also includes vaulted ceilings) and scissor trusses (decorated and non structural). The hammer beam design is the most commonly used but it is the most problematic since the wood is subject to creep and shrinkage. If left untreated, the walls may push outwards. Tension rods may be needed to resist considerable forces.

A general lack of maintenance will lead to serious deterioration. Some faith communities avoid the maintenance cost of the tower and spire by removing them, while others fully restore these components of the building. Stained glass windows are another important aspect of a religious building. More often than not, when stained glass windows are restored, the wood tracery and frames are ignored.

Overall, the use of proper tools, skills and regular maintenance is fundamental for the survival of religious buildings. Building owners must plan together for a comprehensive building assessment. As a rule of thumb, the exterior of the building should be secure before working on the interior, and true materials and known technologies should be used to ensure the longevity of the building.

Marcus Letourneau, Heritage Planner for the City of Kingston

Marcus Letourneau addressed the issues and challenges concerning rural municipalities. Urban and rural municipal issues are not the same yet the programmes, policy procedures and legislations are designed in a “one size fits all” model. On the contrary, rural issues are not simple but complex and multi faceted.

Firstly, in rural communities, municipal workers often have multiple roles. The deputy clerk, heritage planner and chief building official may be one person fulfilling all three roles. The roles and responsibilities required to understand all facets of these jobs are difficult. Workers must maintain a proper balance but this can be difficult when they are pulled in different directions by sometimes contradictory roles. Also, rural municipalities do not have the same access to resources as large municipalities. Generally, there is a lack of money, time and people in rural municipalities. The heritage incentive programs used in urban municipalities, such as the provincial tax incentive program, is not always as effective in rural municipalities. Another challenge for small towns is the lack of training and experience. People are not able to respond to heritage issues as quickly as possible.

On the other hand, there are opportunities in rural municipalities that are not present in urban settings. For example, the integrity found at First Nations sites and cultural landscapes are better in rural settings because towns are often not susceptible to the same development pressures as urban municipalities. Also, there is a tremendous support system and commitment to major landmarks in rural municipalities because they are integral to the identity of the community.

## Discussion

*What do we need to do to make sure significant churches are standing in the next twenty years?*

- Bruce Pappin: It all comes down to money in the long run. The assistance and resources may need to be topped up at St. Paul's in the future. The community commitment is tremendous and we need to draw on that. In the long run, we are going to have to look at topping up the coffers of these communities to have an ongoing congregation. We are going to need technical and financial support.
- Rev Nil A Guillemette: The lack of people jeopardises our parishes, not finances. The church will remain open if there are people and there has been an exodus of people out of our province.

*Do you have any advice for rural communities regarding conservation?*

- Allan Avis: We see very similar issues in rural faith communities. On occasion, several parishes come together to build a new church yet new construction is not a better option than fixing old church buildings.
- Marcus Letourneau: It is important to reflect on the community value of the building. Who identifies these values and why? There will be a struggle in the communities to save every building but not all of them can be saved. You need a comprehensive plan because it will be a challenge with no easy solution.

*Is private use not a better fate for redundant rural churches than trying to keep them operating as places of worship?*

- Bruce Pappin: If there is no economy in the area, it can be very difficult to find anyone with sufficient funds to maintain the church and live there. You need a good tourism economy but it will be tough were economy is disintegrating.
- Allan Avis: In south western Ontario we do see smaller church buildings turned into private residences, but large churches are abandoned because they are too big for a single family. There is also the complication of caring for an attached cemetery.

*In Quebec, members of some congregations would rather see a building demolished than left standing unused (or used for another purpose). Is there more public tolerance for this kind of reuse in Ontario?*

- Sean Fraser: There is an incredible diversity in Ontario as opposed to the strong Catholic tradition of Quebec. This creates different associations with religious buildings in the public opinion.
- Bruce Pappin: There is a lot of pressure to demolish certain buildings, but we have to respect the diversity of concerns in each parish. We remove our symbols when we sell our buildings but we still need to promote dialogue in our communities

*Can you speak to your experience with smaller communities and rural communities in the United States?*

- Robert Jaeger: We had to adjust how people asked and raised money in smaller communities. Rural congregations are being called on to provide the same services.



## Adaptive Reuse of Redundant Houses of Worship

Laura Hatcher, Planner, Ontario Heritage Trust

Laura Hatcher presented a survey of the types of conversions that we are currently seeing in Ontario. Religious buildings are located in prominent locations across the province but abandoned sites are at risk of being lost and targeted for demolition and redevelopment. The Ontario Heritage Trust assembled research on four hundred houses of worship and they are also tracking buildings that are currently used by other religious groups.

There are a number of different typologies for adaptive reuse, offering a range of possibilities for conversion. One of the first examples of an easy adaptive reuse is a conversion from one faith group to another. Often, different faith groups require a large open space and a sense of the sacred. Architecturally and structurally there are no changes, but important changes take place in the interior of the building. St. George's' Orthodox Church was originally the Holy Blossom Jewish community church in Toronto. The onion dome was replaced with hemispherical domes. The drum on the central dome was later altered for a stained glass clerestory.

Other adaptations include performance and community spaces. Because churches have a long history of being community service providers, it is only natural for these buildings to become community centres. Houses of worship are compatible with performance spaces because of the large open and flexible space, clear sight lines and acoustics. The former Methodist and United Church in Toronto is now the Bathurst Street theatre. Examples of community spaces include the Wellington Community Historic Museum and the Glebe community Centre in Ottawa.

Religious spaces are novelty spaces that are also used for commercial and business enterprises. The former church in Campbellford, Northumberland was transformed into a micro brewery, known as the Church Key Brewery. The Green Door Bed and Breakfast in Brockville is another example.

Finally, residential developments in affordable housing, luxurious condominiums and retirement homes are on the rise. A former Orthodox church in Ottawa was transformed into forty affordable houses while in Toronto, the Church Lofts project was converted into twenty- eight luxury condo lofts. Loft projects are promoted as unique real estate spaces but there are few developers who are willing to take on these projects.

Louise McGugan, Architect, Barry Padolsky Architects

Louise McGugan talked about St. Brigid's former Roman Catholic Church in Lowertown Ottawa and its recent conversion into St. Brigid's Cultural Centre for the Arts and Humanities. The building is also a home for the Irish Canadian Cultural Centre. Due to escalating maintenance costs, the church was deconsecrated by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in Ottawa in 2007. The building was purchased by a small group of individuals that did not want to see the project go into the hands of developers.

Today the building operates as a multi performance space for lectures, conferences, private parties, exhibitions and concerts. The churches' exterior and interior are designated under part four of the Ontario Heritage Act. The interior designation includes the pews, altar, organ and all of the religious



iconography inside the building.

There were a number of structural problems on the churches' exterior. Firstly, the stonework of the three main sets of entrance steps on the north side was in bad shape. The exterior of the stained glass windows are held in wooden frames that are in poor condition. Also, the towers have structural cracking through the mason work.

Although the exterior of the church is Romanesque revival, the interior is neo gothic revival. It has a three part nave with an elaborate fan vaulted wooden ceiling. In 1908 an extensive interior painting program took place at St. Brigid's by a Quebecois painter. The program included stencilling, gilding and faux marble finishes on all of the columns. Like so many other Roman Catholic Churches in the 1960's, the interior of the church was white washed. Today there are some places where the original paint scheme is exposed.

In order for the building to generate funds for critical repairs, a performance space was needed. A temporary stage was installed and placed in the alter area of the former church. It was placed on top of the railing without damaging the existing space. The performance space enabled the owners to generate an income that would help repair the building. Additional washrooms were installed in the basement and the future plan will include a foyer, bar, ticket booth and elevators.

#### Robert Mitchell, Builder-Developer, Mitchell Associates

Robert Mitchell offered his perspective on multi unit condominium projects in Toronto. He identified the process and construction of church conversions through a case study. The Glebe lofts were formerly known as the Riverdale Presbyterian Church. Built in 1902, the church was attached to another smaller church located on the north side of the building. The initial congregation outgrew the church and required a larger space for worship. With time, the congregation dwindled in size and the community moved back into the smaller church. The larger building remained vacant and was used in film shoots and concert productions.

In terms of the building's construction, because the church was built during the turn of the century, it is more compatible for conversions than spaces built in the mid century. Builders have to understand the volume of space that they are working with and how the units will fit together. In the case of the Glebe lofts, the conversion started from the ground up. This helped stabilize the buildings' interior volumes and maintained as much of the building's integrity. For example, the whole exterior of the building's shell was restored yet the stained glass windows were removed because if offered limited lighting.

In order to make a former religious building project successful, many things have to be considered. For example, the basement height of the church was elevated anywhere from four to eight feet. This accommodation avoided the construction of building ramps. Also, garbage pick- up is usually a problem for these projects. If a garbage truck cannot drive onto the site, the garbage will not be picked up. Another set of stairs was constructed and designated as the garbage pickup site for the Glebe lofts.

At the end of the day, building conversions such as the Glebe lofts is not a money making enterprise but a challenging project. Plans should be doable for church adaptations yet they take time and

are difficult to get approved. They are important for the city not only because they are green buildings but because they maintain the character of the neighbourhoods and the streetscapes.

Sharon Vattay, Historian, Goldsmith Borgal and Company Ltd Architects, Associate

Sharon Vattay presented two examples of adaptive reuse from a Hamilton municipal perspective. The first building she discussed is All Saints Anglican Church. It was the fourth oldest stone church built in the gothic revival style. The community called on Vattay for advice on adaptive reuse in order to save the building from demolition. The churches' congregation was small in numbers and felt burdened by the overwhelming maintenance cost of the building. The congregation was relieved when the building was eventually sold to developers for a not for profit housing project.

A heritage designation on All Saints would see the building preserved from a heritage committee perspective but from a council perspective, the designation would be restrictive. Beyond the fact that the best option for a religious building is its original use, can we have a heritage building that is also a not for profit housing project? If congregations are not supported within religious buildings, adaptive reuse is the only option.

The second example is St. Mark's Anglican Church (1877), the fifth oldest Anglican Church in Hamilton. This situation is more complicated than All Saints Anglican Church. The building has been vacant since 1989 when the congregation left the building. It was purchased by the city in 1994 and designated under the Ontario Heritage Act shortly afterwards. Because of the lack of maintenance, there are a number of structural issues, especially around the rear of the church. In addition to structural problems, the city continues to discuss the future use of this building.

St. Marks' is located on a large amount of land that has the potential for development. The two are in fact in conflict; the preservation of the building's heritage is on one hand and development on the other. The city itself started to look at the possibility of developing the project. For example, they thought about the possibility of keeping the building, adaptively reusing the space and adding to the site. The city did a financial case analysis for the options of demolition, adaptive reuse and reconstruction and the result was a negative value. St. Mark's still sits there today, thus illustrating a larger problem. City planners are not able to look at buildings creatively because there are certain guidelines, official plan policies and zoning by laws that are already in place that ultimately direct future development.

## Discussion

*What could municipalities do to encourage these building projects?*

- Robert Mitchell: Zoning is a restrictive thing with no flexibility for unique one- off situations. What used to take six weeks now takes a year and a half and there are more steps you have to go through and more controls in the process. This chokes the majority of projects that might get through otherwise.

*What can municipalities do to improve the use of adaptive behaviour?*

- Sharon Vattay: Overall integration of the planning process with heritage being part of that. We are looking at heritage not churches and the heritage piece lacks coordination.

*What challenges does your project face as a church that has so much decorative arts built into the fabric of its designation?*

- Louise McGugan: The decorative arts are not an issue because it is part of the performance space. It will have different meanings for different people. Once the lights are down it is a performance space. It allows people to feel comfortable in a space where both worlds of religion and theatrical space can be used.