



"But Will It Work?"

The first parish I served in Philadelphia was faced with some difficult choices. The congregation was aging, the building was both too much (sanctuary) and too little (parking, accessibility), and few in the area were interested in attending the multiple shrinking churches in the neighbourhood. The pastor of the LCMS congregation up the road and I proposed some possibilities for mission. The question that often came up, though, was: "If we do this, will it work?"

I reflect back on that question a lot as I think about Ascension's current mission. Back in 2019, a plan was proposed to share both the Gospel of Christ and the mercy of God in the area around our church building, Parc-Extension. We would make our building more visible with a sign. We would share open houses of interest to the people in the neighborhood to show them our building wasn't "scary." We would restart and expand our English outreach. We would refocus our presence on the internet. We would do it all in the name of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, becoming for Parc-Extension "The Good News Place." But would it "work"?

Back in October, we welcomed over three dozen guests to our worship services and shared the story of Jesus. In December, it was hard to tell guests from members at our Christmas Eve service. This month, we reached our building's capacity for our beginners English class, with over 60 students, plus teachers and volunteers, attending. And on Sunday, an Indian family who joined our fellowship several years ago brought three women to worship. They wanted to discuss being baptized, and when that could be arranged.

Our Lutheran confessions state that the Holy Spirit works faith where and when he wills it "in them that hear the Gospel" (Augsburg Confession V). If there is no hearing, there can be no believing (Romans 10:14). We would love for everyone who hears the Gospel through us to confess Christ. That may never be. But what has worked is that, through the ministry you support in Montreal, many hundreds are now hearing the Gospel and some, indeed, are being saved.

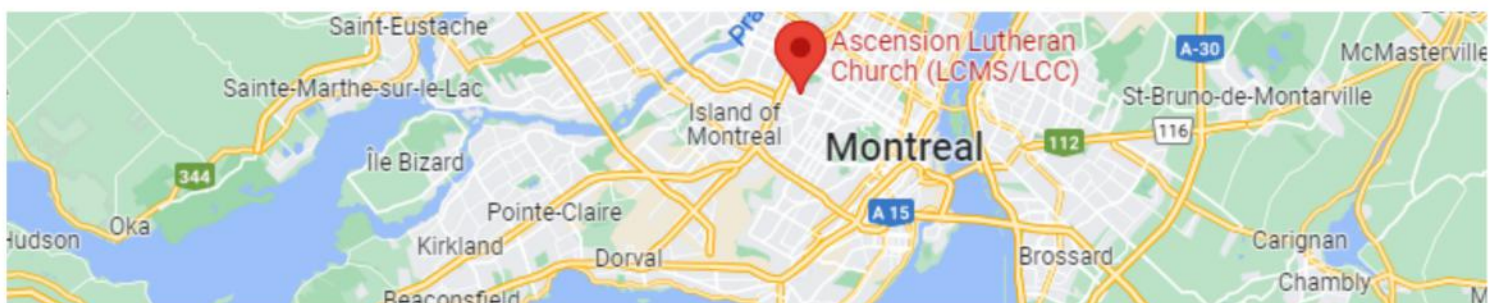
Mission Moment

They just kept coming, one after another, until the line was up the stairs and out our side door. Finally, ten minutes after class was supposed to start, we had to close the door and begin. That was the experience at our English class on Valentine's Day, known in Quebec as "St-Valentin."

The vast majority of our students are of Sikh background, and new immigrants to Canada. Our opening devotion was Psalm 23, which we are exploring each week in class. Last week we talked about sheep, and how Jesus, our Good Shepherd, makes sure we have clean water and good food – his Word and Gospel. We then prayed the whole psalm together.

Ruth Stone leads the large class in our fellowship hall, now full to capacity. I took eight "beginning" beginners * down the hall, past our two boilers, to a back space our deaconess affectionately calls "the Mint Room" for its bright, green colour. There we prayed for the Lord's guidance in learning. We began to learn each other's names: Surdesh, Rajminder, Andrian, Malkit, Charles. We learned hello and goodbye, and talked about the Tower of Babel... and Pentecost. Please pray for the many who are hearing the Gospel!

* My class is now up to 14 students, and we have maxed the capacity of this room.



A Picture's Worth of Words



Clockwise from Top Left: Beginning Beginners English; our "Fat Sunday" Fellowship event; three women interested in baptism; circuit meeting with the leader of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya; Olivia at "Cafe Ambrose," our new Friday campus ministry location.

Prayer Concerns

For the spouses of our new members, that we might winsomely help the Gospel be shared with them in our ministry,

For Nick, Alex and Peter, our newest members, and for those desiring baptism, as well as those whom the Lord knows and will call to himself,

For the youth of Quebec, who find themselves lost and without a foundation, that we might be a good witness to them that life has meaning and purpose in God our Father through Christ our Lord.

Support this Work

Support can be sent care of "ST-ONGE FAMILY" at Mission Central or "MONTREAL MISSION" at the LCMS:

Mission Central
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