

## Visioning at Harcourt

Welcome to our possible future!

In the past many months, we have journeyed together:

- from group discussions
- to developing a synthesis of those discussions
- to representing those discussions in sticky notes
- to building several paths of “next near steps”, ultimately crossing from this side (here and now) to the other side (over there)

We have also drafted a purpose:

***Harcourt is on a journey from the current congregational organizational structure towards empowering various communities of the faithful to live out their passion, one step at a time, into a future filled with experimentation and learning.***



Our vision speaks to experimentation. We need to determine our willingness to create steps across the river – as we go – not knowing our eventual outcome now.

To help envision experiment possibilities, we have now crafted possible scenarios about how we got to our future – **in 2025** – using those paths crossing the river. So, place yourself somewhere in 2025 and reflect on how we might have arrived there.

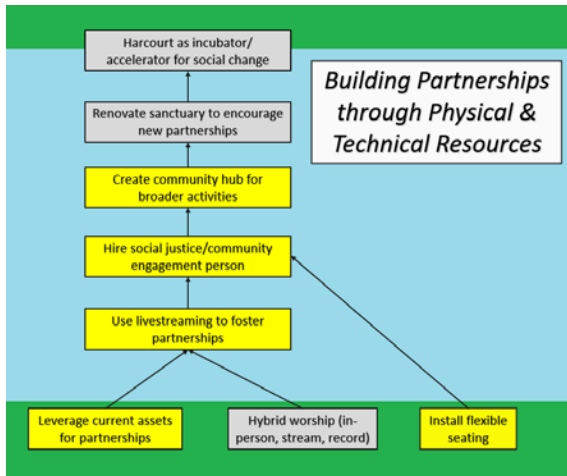
As we reflect, let's wonder...

We wonder... what part of the scenarios you liked best?

We wonder... what part did you consider most important?

We wonder... where are you in the scenarios, or what part of the scenarios are about you?

## Building Partnerships – a path of “next near steps”

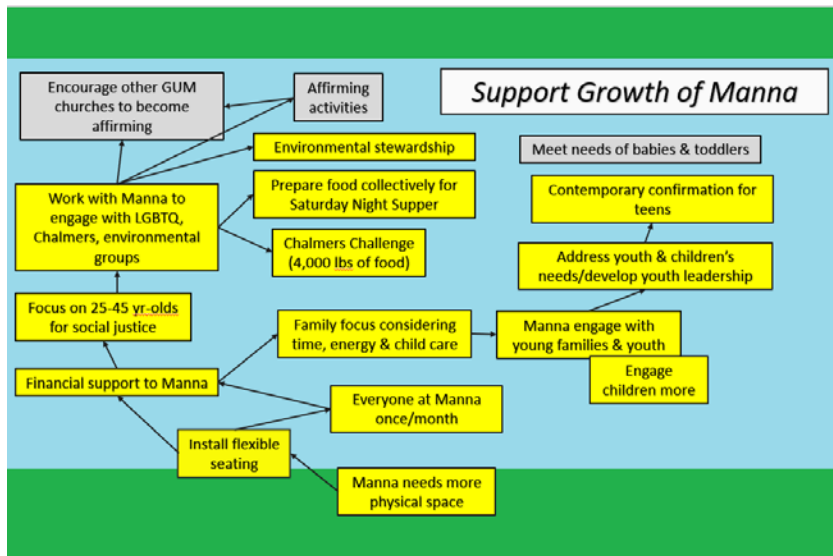


### Imagine looking back from 2025... Possible Scenario #1

- **In the fall of 2019**, Harcourt voted to replace the pews in the sanctuary with flexible seating. This decision was taken to provide suitable space for the growing Manna community; to expand opportunities for experimentation in worship; to make the space more friendly and welcoming; and to promote good stewardship of the space by expanding potential use by the community at large.
- Carolyn, Merrill and others put together an implementation plan, and in **early 2022**, the physical transformation began.
- **As well, in 2021**, following Joan Barham’s passing, the congregation fundraised to realize her prophetic dream to install livestreaming equipment in the Sanctuary.
- These changes brought in the [Guelph Chamber Choir](#) and Guelph’s [Third Age Learning](#) as users of the sanctuary space.
- **Later in 2022**, Harcourt volunteers were working with [Chalmers](#) advocates to establish a 2-night-a-week food preparation program for distribution to Chalmers clients.
- **By early 2023**, Harcourt had partnered with [Church of the Apostles](#) as a second site for their [Kitchen Bees program](#). This joint initiative caught the eye of several groups of one of the co-op program planners at the University. As a result, we had a succession of students participating in outreach programs involving food security and urban agriculture.
- Awareness of these community partnerships led to [Guelph United Ministries \(GUM\)](#) hiring a social justice/community engagement lead on a half-time basis by the **end of 2023**.

- **By early 2024**, the community engagement lead had expanded the food preparation/distribution program to include a three-morning-a-week café run as a franchise by Planet Bean in the newly renovated Sanctuary space.
- Coffee time conversations led to deeper discussion ... **and by 2025**, with the help of [EDGE](#), Harcourt transformed itself into a gathering place, for healing and wellness – in addition to the food-based programs. Harcourt’s Hub is a vibrant, inclusive, respectful and safe place where the community gathers to form and sustain relationships and partnerships for the common good of our community.

## Support the Growth of Manna – a path of “next near steps”

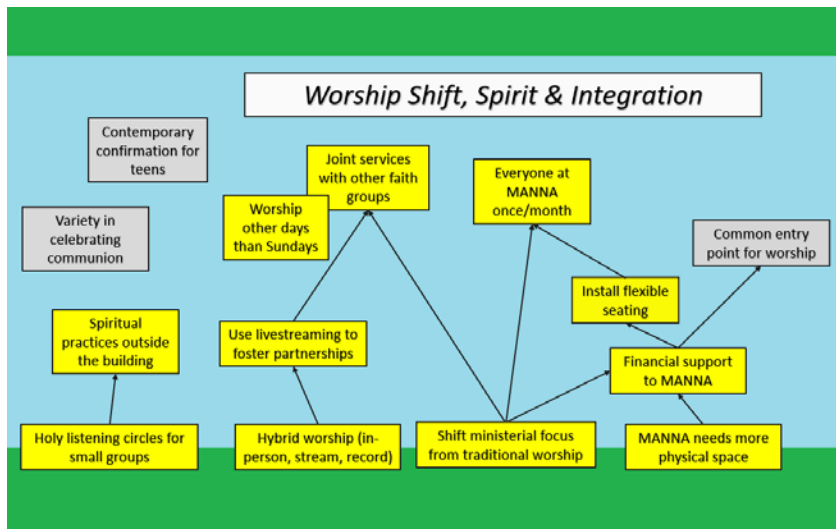


### Imagine looking back from 2025... Possible Scenario #2

- **By 2022**, following the lessening of Covid restrictions, Manna was gathering in the Sanctuary on Sunday mornings in small, face-to-face circles, exploring scripture through stories, music, art and discussion – averaging about 30-40 people per Sunday.
- With the pew removal, Manna was now meeting in the Sanctuary, and **toward the end of 2022** people attending the earlier service started to see what Manna was doing and stayed, especially to join in the meal sharing. This eventually led to Everyone-at-Manna-once/month events.
- **Also in mid-late 2022**, with many people joining Manna once a month, like-minded people with similar interests in outreach and social justice began to share in Manna initiatives in these areas, supporting and connecting with some of the projects that Manna had been talking about for a while (some since before the pandemic).
- **In 2022**, Manna youth started having monthly space to build community and explore meaningful spiritual practices together on Sunday mornings. Youth were empowered to lead and direct their learning together with staff support.
- Some youth had asked to be confirmed in the United Church. A confirmation program was re-developed supporting these youth in their journey. This started to suggest a new way of looking at membership and what it meant to be confirmed in the United Church. This new view focused on confirming a commitment to their wider community, defined by participation in 3 social justice activities in their confirmation year.

- **In 2023**, Manna and friends continued their participation in planting trees through Wellington County's [Green Legacy Programme](#). The teams worked to provide trees to meet the county standard, pulling in members of Harcourt to continue this activity on a yearly basis. Furthermore, they were able to get public schools involved to collect tree sponsorships from their schoolmates, families and friends.
- **As well, in 2023** Manna got involved in the 2Rivers Cleanup initiative. Again, members from the broader Harcourt community joined in. This led to participation in the [Two Rivers Festival](#). Harcourt musicians participated in the songwriting and spoken word presentations. This sparked a connection with the Environmental Engineering students at the University of Guelph, resulting in three Masters' students giving messages at Harcourt Sunday gatherings.
- **Also in 2023**, the folks involved in small group formation used these two environmental initiatives as an opportunity for teens and tweens to explore and deepen their spirituality, build community with peers, and build relationships with each other.
- **In 2024**, Manna began setting aside at least one Sunday gathering a month to focus on social justice issues, build relationships with partners, and participate in service and action together. For many, particularly those aged 25 to 45, this was an important way of being church.
- **In 2025**, social justice work inspired Manna and other Harcourt members to organize Pride events. These included volunteering for [Rainbow Chorus](#) concerts and using that concert to kick off the Pride parade in Guelph. As a result of involving the teens, the LGBTQ committee reached out to high schools to provide support, mentoring and advice. Harcourt became a meeting place for [Out on the Shelf](#), and a new program supporting these students began.
- Harcourt's technical support staff supported Out on the Shelf's youth program by lending their talents to support the youth in creating videos, further empowering their leadership.

## Worship Shift, Spirit & Integration – a path of “next near steps”



### Imagine looking back from 2025... Possible Scenario #3

- **In 2022**, Manna continued their justice and outreach activities. This was a natural growth from the environmental and Chalmers support that they had been doing in recent years. Because of this focus and because Harcourt was looking for different operating models, Harcourt created a new Manna-Council connection to represent and speak to justice and outreach activities initiated through Manna.
- **In the fall of 2022**, the Harcourt ministry team partnered with the Worship Committee, Spiritual Life Committee and Manna to define and refine a hybrid worship model started during the pandemic. The overall goal of this model was to embrace togetherness as much as possible and to look for opportunities to leverage new technology and spaces. This new model incorporated traditional structured forms of Sunday worship as well as new livestreaming partnerships (especially with regard to music), interactive worship and circle gathering groups, and re-visioning of the young adult ministry.
- **In the fall of 2022**, news of Manna’s focus on justice and outreach opportunities attracted like-minded participants from the other GUM churches. Now, Manna is holding the Manna service at other GUM sites every two months, in addition to Manna services outdoors every two months, to which all are invited.
- **Early in 2023**, these multi-site Manna sessions evolved to a yoga-with-families practice for all ages: at Dublin on Mondays and Wednesdays, and at Harcourt on Fridays.

- **In early summer of 2023**, the hybrid worship model moved further to coordinate and share resources with Guelph United Ministries (GUM). This included looking at the wider Guelph Community (including the University of Guelph) to begin holding joint services with other faith communities. A specific point of integration began through the practice of the Holy Listening circles.
- **Later in 2023**, spiritual life further expanded Harcourt's outreach to the community by offering spiritual practice opportunities once every two months at different locations in the city, with a particular focus in the downtown area.
- **By summer of 2023**, these spiritual practice opportunities, coupled with the small group worship activities (as part of the hybrid worship practices) led to a broader united ministry network: WELCUM (Wellington County United Ministry network).
- **Also in 2023**, arising from some GUM discussion sessions, Harcourt looked at opportunities to partner in worship with a service organization or charity, to create deeper alignment with well-understood causes. One of these causes has been a new partnership with regional nursing schools (and their new graduates) to work with a brand-new organization, "Ontarians for Better Long-Term Care". This has also involved our spiritual life folks bringing some practices to nursing staff and, ultimately, to the various care communities involved.
- **Late in 2023**, Harcourt continued to learn about ways they could partner with and support a local organization, [Anishnabeg Outreach](#), and the organization's vision to create a sustainable and comprehensive suite of services for urban First Nation, Métis, and Inuit residents. Harcourt learned from Anishnabeg Outreach, and our GUM partners, about various ways we could support this vision. These initial partnerships led to further organizational training on reconciliation.
- **By 2024**, this had led to Anishnabeg Outreach using the Harcourt Hub as a Centre of Wellness and Healing, serving Guelph's urban Indigenous community. Learning about the Centre and its work for reconciliation and healing is now a part of the new confirmation approach that has been adopted by Manna.
- **Mid-way through 2024**, Indigenous-led wellness activities sprang up from the Centre of Wellness and Healing at the Hub, offering Indigenous ways of healing, including practices of restorative justice. Now, members of the GUM churches are learning how they might further support other marginalized communities.
- **By Christmas 2024**, the GUM extension of this partnership with Anishnabeg Outreach led to worship experiences with the Chalmers community, helping to bring restorative justice practices to address conflicts that arise from time to time within the communities represented there.

- **In 2025**, local Muslim communities of faith began inquiring about attending Harcourt Hub to learn these practices to help bring these techniques to the high schools, where Muslim students continue to face racism and discrimination.
- **In the spring of 2025**, as worship energies shifted from more traditional worship to the community, the spiritual life practice group was asked to help discern what a changed ministerial calling might be. This discernment process led to a change in focus, where the ordained ministerial staff devoted 50% of their time to Sunday-style worship and 50% of their time to practicing outreach in the community at large.

## Links

Anishnabeg Outreach: [aocan.org](http://aocan.org)

Chalmers Community Services Centre: [chalmerscentre.ca](http://chalmerscentre.ca)

Church of the Apostles: [apostlesguelph.org](http://apostlesguelph.org)

EDGE: [edge-ucc.ca](http://edge-ucc.ca)

Green Legacy Programme: [wellington.ca/en/discover/greenlegacyprogramme.aspx](http://wellington.ca/en/discover/greenlegacyprogramme.aspx)

Guelph Chamber Choir: [guelphchamberchoir.ca](http://guelphchamberchoir.ca)

Guelph United Ministries (GUM): [guelphunited.org](http://guelphunited.org)

*Kitchen Bees* program: [apostlesguelph.org/community-programs](http://apostlesguelph.org/community-programs)

Out on the Shelf: [www.outontheshelf.com](http://www.outontheshelf.com)

Rainbow Chorus Waterloo-Wellington: [rainbowchorus.ca](http://rainbowchorus.ca)

Third Age Learning: [talg.ca](http://talg.ca)

Two Rivers Festival: [2riversfestival.org](http://2riversfestival.org)