

Case Statement for Capital Fundraising Campaign

Elevator Accessibility Project

Crescent Fort Rouge United Church has embarked on an ambitious plan to create a community/arts centre to function in partnership with the worshipping church. To better serve the community, facility updates are needed to enhance the accessibility, safety and convenience for all.

We are appealing to you for financial support to install an elevator to allow universal access to the building and its three levels, as well as to improve washroom availability and accessibility. Included in this project are a number of associated upgrades.

We will begin with a brief description of who we are, how we arrived at our mission, and our plans for the future. Finally, we will summarize the Accessibility with Ease project. Greater detail will be provided in the appendices.

About Us

Completed in 1910, Crescent Fort Rouge United Church is a splendid old church, a monument to the faith, representative of an era when church sanctuaries were overflowing and there was no reason to assume that trend would not go on forever. From the beginning, the congregation shared its space with a variety of social and arts organizations.

Many of our current partners have been with us for a very long time. The relationship with our inhouse daycare, Fort Rouge Child Care, began in 1964. Practically every choral group in the city has performed in our sanctuary over the past many decades. In fact, because of its size and acoustical qualities, our sanctuary is considered to be one of the finest choral venues in the city.

Today, although the church has been well maintained, there are many signs of age and at least up until our recent adventures with the Covid virus, there was plenty of space in the pews between the few Sunday morning worshipers.

With the challenges we face of declining membership and decaying infrastructure, how does a congregation like ours continue to answer the call to serve our faith and our community?

To find our own answers to this question, Crescent Fort Rouge United Church embarked on a years-long adventure of reimagining our mission and purpose. We called this process PATH, and for a complete description, please see Appendix 1.

Based upon the areas of community involvement where we have demonstrated strengths in the past, as well as the unique assets of our facility and infrastructure, we settled on three broad areas of outreach ministry.

They are:

- Outreach to children and young families, especially those of limited means
- To provide opportunities for social connection and learning for seniors
- To provide hospitality to the Arts

Upon determining our mission, we dove right into developing our programs and partnerships.

We have found ways to create new programming, much of which overlaps between the three areas of outreach ministry.

Here are some examples.

- Art City has partnered with us to offer after-school art exploration for Fort Rouge Childcare children and students from nearby Gladstone School.
- Home Routes, an organization that promotes the appreciation of folk music, has joined us to provide ukulele lessons for kids and seniors.
- An activity director was hired to promote healthy, fun and informative programming for seniors.
- Families Forward is a government sponsored program that nurtures children and families in the Fort Rouge/River Heights area. They joined us to offer “Kids at Play” programming for toddlers and their parents in our gymnasium.
- With Home Routes, we have hosted a week-long Vaudeville event for the past few years.
- Our relationship with the Keep Theatre, a small, local company, has grown into a full partnership.

The list of groups that share space with us or partner with our church in their programming is long and diverse. A more complete accounting is presented in Appendix 2.

CFRUC has become a very busy place, and it feels like the vision is being realized. There is pleasure in knowing that many are enjoying the activities and are feeling at home here. It feels like we are part of an expanding family, that blesses us with their ideas, talents and enthusiasm. The Spirit is truly at work.

The rewards for us are intangible and on our own, we would not have been inclined to determine their financial worth. However, it is of interest that in 2019, CFRUC participated in a study which attempted to place a dollar value on the beneficial socio-economic impact of faith communities on their surrounding communities. It was called “the Halo Project”. In that year CFRUC was found to have provided \$ 3.24 million worth of social benefit to the City of Winnipeg with an annual expenditure of \$358,536.00, representing a greater than nine to one ratio of benefit to expense. It is humbling to have been given such an impressive score, and it shows just how much churches like ours are important to our communities.

However, the constant activity in our church and the challenge to manage the booking and technical support needs of our partners became increasingly complex for our existing staff and resources. In fact, it was determined that in an average week, only 15 % of the hours of activity in our building were related to the worshipping church. The rest of the time, the place was filled with the wonderful programming of our partners. This prompted us to consider new and more effective ways of managing the building and all the events. As a result, the Crescent Art Centre (CAC) was created and incorporated in 2017.

Just recently, we supported the hiring by the CAC of an event manager. For more on the CAC and its relationship with CFRUC, see Appendix 3.

We have begun the process of making improvements in our facility, with the help of local granting agencies, to better meet the needs of our partners.

Some examples are listed.

- A new, professional-quality sound system has been installed in the sanctuary.
- We now have state of the art recording and live streaming equipment.
- We have choir risers on site to share with our choral group partners.
- The external door locks have been changed to combination pads to allow easier access for our user groups.

This leads us to our major capital fund raising challenge.

The Accessibility with Ease Project

For all user groups, any barrier to entry and access to the three levels of the building, is a major issue. All levels currently require step mobility for access. The Nassau Street entrance to our sanctuary is two meters above grade. A lengthy wooden ramp provides access to this entrance, but the doors are normally locked except for during Sunday services. Our second main entrance on Wardlaw Avenue, is used for weekday activities and it has 11 steps to reach the main level. This entrance provides access to all the spaces in the church including: the sanctuary, the

offices, lower and upper halls, washrooms, meeting rooms, and to Fort Rouge Childcare and the gymnasium in the basement.

No doors in the building have power assist to help people to open them. The fire alarm system is old, inadequate for the hearing impaired and needs to be improved and extended into areas that will be reconfigured as part of the project. Public washroom availability and accessibility is extremely limited and requires updating to meet current standards.

These limitations, led us in 2017, to embark upon the Accessibility with Ease Project. An elevator, universally accessible washrooms, power assist doors, and a current fire alarm system are the main components of this project.

The full details of the three phased Accessibility Project, including: explanation, diagrams, and financial considerations are found in Appendix 4.

Your financial support of the Accessibility with Ease project will ensure that the programming offered by CFRUC and its partners will be available and accessible to all. We are grateful that in supporting this endeavor, you share our vision for a better world, one community at a time.