

Marda Loop CHURCH



June 28th, 2023

Hello Everyone,

Attached is the revised vision proposal for Marda Loop Church (along with a summary of congregational input from our June 11th meeting).

We'd like to thank you for participating in the process and sharing your thoughts.

As promised, the leadership team has reviewed all input and has incorporated ideas that align with the benefits we're seeking through this new vision into this updated proposal (the additions/changes are underlined).

We understand that changing from a Sunday-centric church to an Engaging-God-Everywhere church is challenging for some. We want to encourage everyone to simply try it out over the next year by actively engaging the 'everyday' materials we'll be producing, joining a small group, sharing your community service ideas, leading something new, or simply following and engaging the church community on social media. Who knows what new things God may have for you?

As a leadership team we are hopeful for our church, and we trust that the 'God who does new things' is with us on this journey.

"See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland."
God via the prophet Isaiah, 43:19, NIV

Thank you for being a part of the MLC community. If you have any questions or comments about this proposal revision (or anything else), please reach out to any of the leadership team members below.

Your MLC Leadership Team

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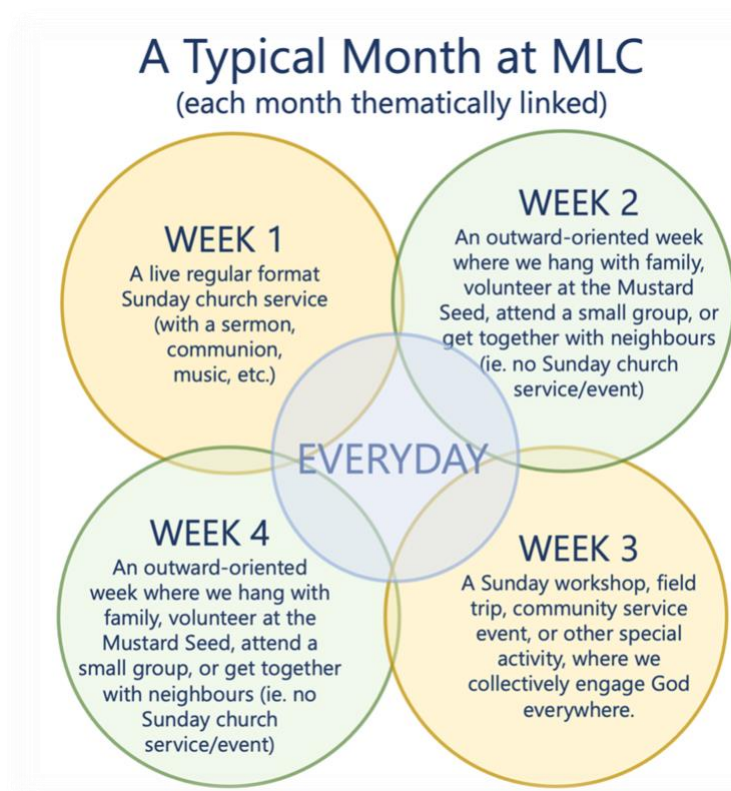
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Our Calling

At Marda Loop Church we want to help people *Engage God Everywhere*. Through creative, communal, relevant, and accessible means we want to meet people where they're at—live, online, anytime, and anywhere.

We love our city and want to connect with people who don't go to church, along with supporting community service projects. We want to help people spiritually grow in a variety of creative ways, 'be church' for all ages, expand our definition of church beyond Sunday mornings, and make room for thoughtful spiritual conversation.

To be this kind of church we see ourselves gathering in a variety of ways. This variety begins to make room for different forms of spiritual engagement, meets people where they are at, and is practically doable (given our current staff/volunteer/resource challenges). Starting this September we're imagining that a typical month of services could look something like this:



WEEK 1 – will look like the Sunday morning services we've already been having (with a 10 am start, a few songs, a sermon, communion, etc.).

WEEKS 2 & 4 will be different, with no formal Sunday morning church service. On these weeks our community will engage God more organically in their everyday lives. Self-guided activities could include gathering in small groups, family time, going for breakfast with friends, serving at the Mustard Seed, or engaging a personal spiritual practice (like going for a hike and praying, reading a book and enjoying God's narrative wisdom, or engaging God via work). Weeks 2 & 4 are the weeks

where we practice what we preach in terms of more intentionally Engaging God Everywhere.

WEEK 3 will be a Sunday morning gathering with a different look. Some Sundays we'll host a workshop on topics like 'God and Science', 'How to Pray', or the 'Theology of Work'. On others

we'll get out of the building and go to the zoo, serve at Marda Gras, or host a community BBQ. On still others we'll try something new: like hosting a children's film, presenting a concert, or running a book sale. On 'Week 3 Sundays' we'll *collectively* engage in activities that help us practice Engaging God Everywhere.

WEEK FIVE (four or five times a year) will be shaped in any of the above ways, as needed.

EVERYDAY – Overlapping all these weeks will be a new series of come-along-side church moments that we're calling 'EVERYDAY'. While these moments may not play out *every* day, 2-3 times a week Pastor John will record and post [a short video](#) unpacking a bible text or sharing a God-in-creation moment (check out the reels on the church Instagram page!). Once a month, he'll also post an article he's written, or a news story, or a spiritual practice. Every other month, you'll receive an invitation to an online (or local) talk that Pastor John (or another speaker) is giving on a topic relevant to our church. The idea with EVERYDAY is to expand the conversation beyond 'gathered events' and bring it into everyone's everyday life.



For this new model to succeed communication is key.

We imagine the process playing out something like this—Daryll may plan a Mustard Seed community service event for Week 2 in October, the invitation goes out to everyone via email, social media, and the MLC website in September, and all who want to participate contact Daryll and join the service project. Or perhaps Rita and Dennis may want to host a monthly Week 4 small group meeting to study the bible... Or maybe Theo has an idea for a Week 3 workshop on end-of-life financial planning... Rayne might want to host a Week 1 post-service online coffee social for virtual attendees... George may plan to lead a midweek music night at his place... etc.

In order to coordinate all of these new activities MLC will build its communication capacity by hiring a new part time staff person. The idea is to keep everyone in the loop and leave nobody behind (live or online, adults or children, those already a part of the church and those yet to join).

The hope is that our church will be increasingly community-led and less pastor-led. It will be more organic and outward focused and less programmatic—more fluid and adaptable and less rigid.

And for those of you who don't do social media, we'll teach you (if you'd like).

Going forward we hope to also regularly tell the stories of how this new vision is playing out in people's lives. Knowing that this is just the first step in a new direction, we'll also continue to explain what we're doing, why we're doing it, and how God is working through it all.

And if you're still wondering why are we stepping into this new direction, its because we've begun to realize that an Engaging-God-Everywhere worldview can't fit into a solely Sunday-centric model. Our vision is too big for an hour long meeting in a small sanctuary. Our definition of church is expanding so that we can better experience the everywhere God in everything. The hope in stepping into this new model is that each of us will learn how to discern God's very real presence in every facet of our ordinary lives: at work, in the garden, with family, through the news, reading books, taking walks, or going to school. We're trying to heed the Apostle Paul's guidance:

"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you."

Romans 12:1-2, NIV

Thematically Linked

Our plan is that all monthly activities will be thematically linked. We'll spend the entire month—via a variety of learning styles, activities, locales, and media—thinking into and experiencing a particular facet of the nature of God. The diagram on the right shows our plan for exploring science this September. Several EVERYDAY moments are already falling into place—a public lecture at Ambrose University, an article in the Calgary Herald, and a podcast interview (or two) re: Pastor John's new book (we'll probably host a book release party too!).



Below is a draft schedule that begins to imagine how future months might look.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We see several benefits in reshaping Marda Loop Church in this way:

1. Hosting Sunday morning gatherings twice a month will allow for some continuity with the current model. These events will continue to be livestreamed and posted online with the goal of increasing real-time, meaningful, online engagement.
2. By deliberately stepping away from two Sunday morning gatherings a month we make more room for the everyday experience of ‘church/God’ to grow.
3. Introducing more connection, dialogue, conversation, community interaction, and life application into the spiritual growth process will grow our faith community.
4. Moving away from a solely Sunday-centric attractional model of church will help us learn how to live out our faith in the rest of life—Engaging God Everywhere.
5. Stepping into a model that works for both staff and volunteers (i.e. this model will enable Pastor John to drop down to a .75 position to do more writing and give our staff and volunteers a regular break) will be more sustainable going forward. And it will also get our vision out into the world in new and exciting ways (via Pastor John’s outward focused writing, teaching, and speaking). This is important to know—the .25 work that we’re freeing pastor John to do IS STILL the work of our church.
6. Reducing the financial pressures on our church may help us continue as a small community with less pressure to grow via traditional metrics (more people and giving).

Marda Loop Church has been given a big theological vision—to Engage God Everywhere. We think that this proposed model makes room for our calling to take hold in a lasting way. And we see this next step as a *first* step in an exciting new direction. Of course, there will be questions going forward and we will adapt accordingly but, as people of faith, we trust that God will continue to lead his church in the years ahead.

MLC 2023/24 — DRAFT Annual Schedule				
Date	SPKR	Series	Type of Service	Details
Sept 3	JVS	Science	Week One	God Loves Science
Sept 10	NONE		Week Two	Self-guided
Sept 17	JVS		Week Three	An interview with U of C endocrinologist/professor Gregory Kline
Sept 24	NONE		Week Four	Self-guided
Oct 1	JVS	Country Music	Week One	The Theology of Country Music
Oct 8	NONE		Week Two	Self-guided
Oct 15	JVS		Week Three	A sermon/seminar on a chart-topping country song
Oct 22	NONE		Week Four	Self-guided
Oct 29	JVS		Week Five	A Sunday night Country Community Concert (with some Marda Loop Church talent included!)
Nov 5	JVS	Neurodiversity	Week One	Made in the Neurodiverse Image of God
Nov 12	NONE		Week Two	Self-guided
Nov 19	JVS		Week Three	Interview a few people who are neurodiverse

Nov 26	NONE		Week Four	Self-guided
Dec 3	JVS	ART	Week One	A message on the art of a Calgary artist...
Dec 10	NONE		Week Two	Self-guided
Dec 17	JVS		Week Three	Explore a few masterpieces depicting the nativity
Dec 24	JVS		Xmas Eve	Xmas Eve service
Dec 31	NONE		Week Five	No service
Jan 7	JVS	Theology of Work	Week One	A message on a specific job (of a church member)
Jan 14	NONE		Week Two	Self-guided
Jan 21	JVS		Week Three	<i>Every Job a Parable</i> Workshop
Jan 28	NONE		Week Four	Self-guided
Feb 4	JVS	Education	Week One	The Theology of Education
Feb 11	NONE		Week Two	Self-guided
Feb 18	JVS		Week Three	Interview three teachers (and discern where God is at work in what they teach, and who they are)
Feb 25	NONE		Week Four	Self-guided
Mar 3	JVS	Science/nature	Week One	God's good gift of Animal Camouflage
Mar 10	NONE		Week Two	Self-guided
Mar 14	JVS		Week Three	The theology of the Human Microbiome
Mar 24	NONE		Week Four	Self-guided
Mar 29		Good Friday		Friday church service
Mar 31		Easter Sunday		Sunday church service
Apr 7	JVS	Spirituality How to Pray	Week One	A sermon on the theology of prayer
Apr 14	NONE		Week Two	Self-guided
Apr 21	JVS		Week Three	Guest speaker teaching on Ignatian Prayer
Apr 28	NONE		Week Four	Self-guided
Apr 24	JVS		Week Five	A personal spiritual 'Engaging God Everywhere' practice
May 5	JVS	Creation Care	Week One	The parable of a Rainbow Trout
May 12	NONE		Week Two	Self-guided
May 19	JVS		Week Three	River cleanup event
May 26	NONE		Week Four	Self-guided
June 2	JVS	Play	Week One	A sermon on the Theology of Play
June 9	NONE		Week Two	Self-guided
June 16	JVS		Week Three	A Spiritual practice of Play workshop
June 23	NONE		Week Four	Self-guided
June 30	JVS		Week Five	Host a game in the park across the street from the church.
July 7		MLC Summer Break		No scheduled church gatherings.
July 14				
July 21				
July 28				
Aug 4	JVS	The Theology of Bees	Week One	The Theology of Bees
Aug 11			Week Two	Self-guided
Aug 18	JVS		Week Three	Community Honey Sampling Party
Aug 25			Week Four	Self-guided