

The Chapel seeks to be positive community influence



A look inside the new atrium at The Chapel, 520 66th St., Niagara Falls.

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direct people who are visiting for the first time or just beginning to identify with our church.”

“It’s a great, great space for us,” he said, noting The Chapel is also developing a plan for an outdoor patio with additional café seating areas.

Since having a soft-opening two weekends ago, “There’s just been noise here – people hanging around,” Cushing gushed. “My dad’s 89. But he’s sitting over here with a fellow 89-year-old after the service, having a coffee and a muffin.

“People aren’t leaving as quickly. Because once you leave the worship center, you’re walking down the hallway and you’re gone. Now, families are hanging out here a little bit. ...

“It just gives more opportunity for people to interact with one another.”

Having this community connection point “opens up opportunities for just so many things to happen here,” Cushing said. “Midweek stuff. We want to have a group in here, whether it’s church-related or just using it for the community. We can do both those things.”

“People are just excited that it’s open,” he said. “We want this space to partner with other ministries that are doing things in the Falls here. We don’t have all the answers, but we’ve got some space. So, if people need to use it to help their ministry, we’re interested in partnerships.”

Cushing added, “This isn’t about the building. It’s not even about the staff. It’s about the people of God loving our community here. ...

“That’s what we’re about: community. Because you can’t do it alone. You can try – and you can be pretty good for awhile. But it’s not what we want for people. So, this allows us to do what we’re after, which is to have people in the community growing in Christ.”

An ‘interesting ride’ getting to this opportunity

Cushing is from Canada and lives in Niagara Falls, Ontario. He’s been at the site in Niagara Falls, New York, since it first opened. He initially served as the music minister before taking over pastoral duties from Jonathan Drake, who is now The Chapel communications director.

“I’ve been involved in music ministry for most of my adult life,” Cushing said. “Vocationally, I’m a teacher. I taught in public school for 25 years. All through those years, I’ve been involved in music ministry, and, I guess, the last 14 years at The Chapel. And then only

See: The Chapel continues to revive former Niagara Catholic High School site on Page 6

recently, I’ve moved to full-time vocational ministry, as the campus pastor. I was full-time vocational ministry in music, but then I just transitioned into the campus pastor role. But I still do lead worship on Sundays, because I enjoy doing that – and it’s a chance for me to lead the people in a different way.”

Cushing called his first year at the helm “an interesting ride, being a teacher and involved in ministry, and then making the switch to full-time ministry. You know, it’s almost like starting a new career, now, as a campus pastor.

“So, lots of changes in the last number of years for me; but I’m excited for what God’s doing at Niagara Falls, especially, but in our church, as well. Just the partnerships that he’s allowing me to develop, even with the local schools around there.”

The Chapel is working with the Niagara Falls School District, as well as neighborhood elementary schools.

“We’ve got some good relationships with both Harry Abate and with Cataract,” Cushing said. “We’re looking forward to greater community connection with the people that live near our campus. And we feel like we’re getting access to do that just with partnerships with the school board, which has been really encouraging to us. Mark Laurie has been a good supporter of us, as the superintendent with the school board, and allowing us to connect with the principals. And then the principals just have been great, too, allowing us to come alongside them, encourage them and support them in different ways.”

“We’re for Niagara Falls,” he said.

The Chapel Lead Pastor Jerry Gillis said, “We are so grateful to have a presence in the great city of Niagara Falls. The expansion of our campus allows us to not only bring spiritual help and encouragement to more families, but also the opportunity to expand our partnerships in the community at large.”

Visit The Chapel at 520 66th St., Niagara Falls, where services are held at 9 and 11 a.m. Sundays. Chapel Students meets from 6:30-9 p.m. each Wednesday throughout the school year.

For more information, visit <https://thechapel.com/> and <https://thechapel.churchcenter.com/pages/niagara-falls-campus>.

NTSB leading crash investigation

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating a plane crash that occurred Saturday in the River Region.

Per the Federal Aviation Administration, “A single-engine Cessna 208B crashed near Lake Road in Youngstown, New York, around 12:50 p.m. local time on Saturday, July 20. The pilot, and only person on board, was conducting parachute operations. The FAA and National Transportation Safety Board will investigate. The NTSB will be in charge of the investigation and will provide any updates.”

NTSB noted, “Under federal law, the NTSB is responsible for investigating and determining the probable cause of every civil aviation accident in the United States (and certain public use aircraft, such as those owned by state and municipal governments). The NTSB also investigates accidents in the other modes of transportation such as rail, highway, marine and pipeline.

“The NTSB is an independent federal agency and is not affiliated with the U.S. Department of Transportation or any of its modal agencies, such as the

Federal Aviation Administration. The FAA is automatically a party to all NTSB aviation investigations.”

On July 20, at approximately 11:40 a.m. the Niagara County Sheriff’s Office communications center began receiving 911 calls reporting a plane crash on the Niagara Scenic Parkway northeast of the Fort Niagara State Park. The crash was also reported to have started a brush fire around the crash site. Niagara County Sheriff’s Office deputies, New York State Troopers, Town of Lewiston Police and New York State Park Police officers responded to the scene. The Youngstown Volunteer Fire Co. was also on scene to extinguish the fires.

The pilot was identified as Melanie Georger, age 26, from the Town of Tonawanda. She was allegedly flying on behalf of Skydive the Falls. The NCSO reported the aircraft had released all divers and was heading back to land when it crashed. The pilot was the only person onboard

at the time of the crash and was killed.

Notification was made to the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board. The scene was immediately secured pending investigation.

Officials at Skydive the Falls expressed their sadness on the loss of Georger, whom they described as “the best of the best.” The pilot was expected to be part of a Skydive the Falls display later that afternoon at the Town of Porter Summerfest.

“We are devastated at the loss of Melanie Georger,” a Facebook post stated. “She was our family, our pilot, our quarterback who lead our team. She wasn’t just a pilot but an aviator. The best of the best. No words can help cope with this tragedy. She will be dearly missed. We love you and will always miss you. You were a legend and legends never die.”

Information courtesy of the FAA, NTSB and Niagara County Sheriff’s Office.

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