ACT FIVE



ACT FIVE 2025-26

ANNUAL REPORT

A PECULIAR PEOPLE: DIRECTOR'S ADDRESS

ACT FIVE AT A GLANCE

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FINANCIAL REPORT

A PECULIAR PEOPLE

DIRECTOR'S ADDRESS

Nine years ago, a principal of a Christian High School approached me and said, "I've had an idea for the past decade that we have not been able to move on… It's called *Character U*."

He shared the backstory for the name, rooted in David Brooks' book, *Road to Character,* that highlights the U-shaped path to character development (you have to go down before you can come back up). He wanted to start a program for high school graduates that would shape their character and prepare them for next steps. It was a broad idea that he pitched in five minutes.

Something happened in that moment that was bigger than either of us.

Over the next two years, the idea grew and took shape, became shared among others, until I was eventually hired to design and direct a pilot gap year program. The name changed, we found a home, staff and students joined for the first year, and we were launched into what have been seven years of more than I could have imagined.

In a proposal before a hiring panel, I shared this quote from James K.A. Smith:

"The primary goal of Christian education is the formation of a peculiar people—a people who desire the kingdom of God and thus undertake their vocations as an expression of that desire." (*Desiring the Kingdom*, 34)

We have sought to pursue this goal–with faith and humility, finding grace at every turn.

Through Covid-19 and a rapidly changing cultural and financial climate; through program designs and pivots, program diversification and the birth of a new charitable organization; through strategic planning and a significant capital project; and through walking with young adults who have been keen, hungry and courageous–the work has been rich and saturated with the goodness of God.

I am humbled to have led and been changed by Act Five since that first conversation in October 2017. It is a gift to have participated in a project that is primarily held by and boldly committed to the fullness of God's Story in the world. I have been continually inspired by communities of young people who have given themselves to the deep and refining love of Christ, to the possibilities of his Kingdom in each of our corners of the world, and to stepping into life with wisdom, compassion and hope.

In the stories, reports and invitations that follow, I trust you will catch glimpses of what I witness here all the time.

There is a peculiar people being formed in this place, those who desire the Kingdom of God and allow every inch of their lives to be opened up by this desire.

As you read of Year 7—our 2025-2026 program year—may you allow your own desires to be shaped in this way.

Thank you for being on this road with us.

In grace,

Jon Berends
Executive Director



ACT FIVE AT A GLANCE

ABOUT ACT FIVE

Act Five is a place-based educational community where young adults live, learn, work, and grow together. We help young adults step into their next chapter with purpose, growing as disciples of Jesus, while preparing for what's ahead.

MISSION

To facilitate Christian discipleship of young people through community, learning and practices designed to grow their Christian faith and equip them for future pathways as rooted and engaged followers of Jesus.

VISION

We see young adults living wholeheartedly as disciples of Jesus, walking faithfully in the contexts of school, church, neighbourhood, and work.

What We Do

GAP YEAR PROGRAM

Nine students graduated from Act Five in April 2026, having spent the year committed to their formation through adventure, learning and service.

actfive.ca/gap-year

RESIDENCY PROGRAM

The 2025–2026 Residency Program welcomed four participants into a year of intentional community, holistic formation and vocational discernment.

actfive.ca/residency

THE FRONT PORCH

Where learning and community meet through our podcast, blog, annual Winter Learning Series and Spaghetti Wednesday.

actfive.ca/the-front-porch



Testimony from Jim Paterson

Artist and Imagineer @jimpatersonartist

"In my interactions with Act Five I've seen the importance they place on creating space for people to be, taking time to figure things out and do the unquantifiable. In these times of accelerated change in how we learn and communicate, the pressures of interfacing with unfolding and intrusive technologies and formulated expectations of our identities are ever increasing. I believe it's important to be able to act counter-intuitively to this narrowing range of values and options we now have, and be given the space to see that God might have other plans and another way for us to complement the way He created us. Act Five provides young adults the space, opportunity and challenge to find their place in the world and respond to God's call as they do. It has been a joy to engage with last year's cohort, and I look forward to building further relationships in the future."

Find The Act Five Podcast on Spotify or Apple Podcasts

Listen in and join the conversation as we wrestle with how to *Faithfully Improvise* in today's world.

EXTERNAL INITIATIVES

UNRELIABLE INSTINCTS:
2026 WINTER LEARNING SERIES

Unreliable Instincts: The Case for a Robust Christian Imagination had 250+ people in attendance over six weeks and 8 institutional sponsors. Our broader community of learning is growing each year!



Episode 38 :

Disordered Narratives, The Gospel, and Belovedness with Dr James K.A. Smith.









JOIN US FOR OUR 2027 WINTER LEARNING SERIES

Benediction Church | 7pm - 9pm February 18 & 25, March 4 & 11

GAP YEAR AT A GLANCE

TERM 1 — SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER

- Move in to Blake St
- Learning at Russet House & Temagami Canoe Trip
- Settling into Hamilton Life
- Thanksgiving Break

NOVEMBER — DECEMBER

- Living, Learning & Serving in and around Hamilton
- Manitoulin Island
- Term Wrap-Up
- Retreat

TERM 2 — JANUARY — FEBRUARY — MARCH

- Service Learning Trip in El Salvador with Resonate Global Mission
- Field Placements in Hamilton
- Winter Camping

APRIL

- Field Placements in Hamilton
- Term Wrap-up
- Backpacking Trip
- Grad & Move Out











Kassia (Student '25-'26)

"Act Five taught me what community and belonging can look like. I was captivated by the idea that God is consecrating every simple rhythm and moment as we learn to surrender to Him in our daily lives."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Alumni Outcomes Report

Emerging adulthood is a significant developmental stage and a crucial time for identity formation, purpose-building and habit development.

Many young adults are navigating this transitional stage of life while facing rising levels of loneliness, mental health pressures and uncertainty about purpose and vocation.

Act Five provides space for young adults to explore questions of faith, identity, community, and work before making long-term commitments to education or career paths. Through community living, mentorship, work placements, adventure and spiritual formation, we offer a structured environment where students can grow in independence, character and clarity about the next stage of life.

We interviewed 42 alumni to understand how their experience at Act Five continues to shape their lives today.

Gen Z: The Landscape

- **64%** Of young adults leave church after attending as a teen *(Barna, 2024)*
- **61%** Report being consistently lonely *(Harvard, 2021)*
- **4.8hrs** A day spent on social media *(Gallup, 2025)*
- **60%** Change majors at least once in university *(UofT, 2025)*
- **31%** Lead on their campuses (*Inside Higher Ed, 2026)*

Act Five Alumni

- **83%** Attend church regularly
- **91%** Report being part of a community of meaning
- **70%** Have a healthy relationship with digital technology
- **70%** Complete the degree they initially set out to pursue
- **58%** Lead on their campuses



Loulou (Student '21-'22)

"Act Five isn't like a normal gap year program. It's a program that isn't just chasing the highs of adventure and life and faith. You get these "higher" moments, but you then have a place to go home to."

Integrated Faith

- **83%** Consistently attend church
- **67%** Are involved in church beyond Sundays
- **76%** Engage in regular spiritual disciplines

Committed to Community

- **91%** Are part of a community of meaning marked by shared belonging and purpose
- **88%** Maintain relationships with fellow alumni
- **67%** Engage intentionally as active members of their communities

Education with Purpose

- **61%** Received merit-based scholarships (vs 29% of Canadian students)
- **72%** Are involved on their campuses
- **58%** Are in positions of leadership on their campuses (TAs, RAs, clubs)

Technology with Intention

Act Five alumni self-report being more likely to set boundaries around their technology:

- Tech free times
- Occasional tech fasts
- Limited social media
- Turning off phones while with friends
- Choosing "dumb phones"

Act Five alumni leave with a strong sense of purpose and direction, prepared to pursue education, careers and calling with intention. They build healthy communities, engage technology with discipline, cultivate lifelong habits of growth and resilience, and remain committed to active participation in local churches.

Our alumni are leaving this place rooted, engaged and ready.



A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

2026-27 Strategic Priorities

In Fall 2024, Act Five identified three strategic priorities that would guide our next season of growth:

1. **Establishing Home**
2. **Opening Doors**
3. **Telling the Story**

Since then, the generosity of our community and the work of our staff and board has transformed those priorities from ideas into reality.

In a significant step forward, we purchased our home and completed substantial renovations. We expanded opportunities for students, developed new ways of connecting through an updated website and year two of our Winter Learning Series, strengthened our staff team, and deepened partnerships across Hamilton and beyond.

We enter the final year of this strategic season with a strong foundation and renewed confidence in what God is building through Act Five.

ESTABLISHING *home*

Completed:
- Permanent Act Five home purchased
- Major renovations finished

Final Priorities:
- Loan repayments to unlock Act Five's financial road map

Need:
- $300,000 to pay back short-term capital loans

OPENING *doors*

Completed:
- Increased financial accessibility for students

Final Priorities:
- Launch NEW Study Centre (Fall 2026)
- Develop robust bursary options & funds

Need:
- $100,000 toward student bursaries

TELLING THE *story*

Completed:
- New website launched
- Communications strategy strengthened

Final Priorities:
- Share the Act Five story nationally & internationally

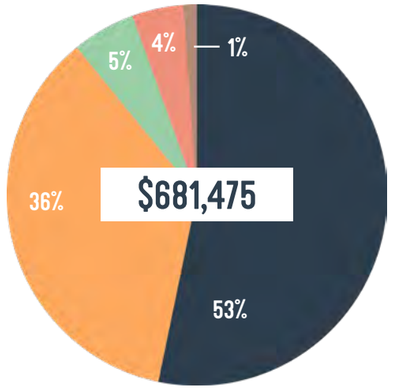
Need:
- $50,000 to share Act Five in new places



2025-26 FINANCIAL REPORT

Revenue and expenses for Act Five's Fiscal Year, from May 1, 2025 to April 30, 2026.

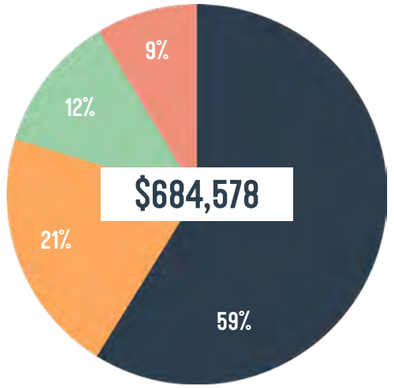
This report includes operational revenue and expenses. Capital revenue and expenses are noted separately.



REVENUE

⬇ *4.75% from 2024-2025*

- Donations — $362,926
- Tuition, Program Fees, Room & Board — $244,321
- Partnerships — $36,711
- Fees for Service & Additional Revenue — $29,726
- Bursaries — $7,791



EXPENSES

⬆ *5% from 2024-2025*

- Employee Wages & Benefits — $402,679
- Program — $143,049
- Property — $79,835
- Administrative — $59,015

2024-25 Revenue $715,434 | 2024-25 Expenses $652,034

Thank you to all those who continue to support the work of Act Five!

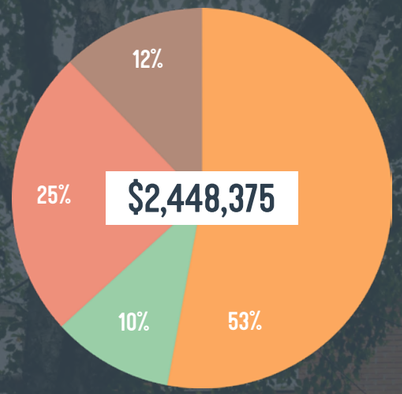
We are so grateful for the generosity of the community surrounding us who are opening doors for more young people to step into a year at Act Five.

178 NEW DONORS

25 MAJOR DONORS *($5000+)*

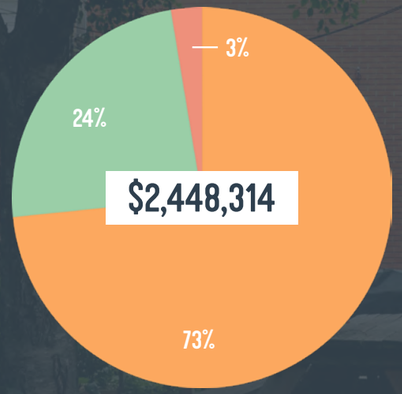
5 NEW INSTITUTIONAL SPONSORSHIPS

ESTABLISHING *home* FINANCIAL REPORT



REVENUE

- Gifts Received to date — $1,295,875
- Gifts Pledged through 2028 — $252,500
- Mortgage* — $600,000
- Remaining Short-Term Loans† — $300,000



EXPENSES

- Purchase Price (including closing costs) — $1,796,667 (*Budgeted $1,795,500*)
- Property Renovations — $587,289 (*Budgeted $739,000*)
- Project Support & Campaign Costs — $64,358 (*Budgeted $71,000*)

** 5 years at 6.24% through Capstone Mortgage Services, capstonemortgage.ca*

† Payable between 2028 and 2029, at 0% to 2.5%

In May 2025 the long-term Act Five home became ours.

Thanks to the incredible work of VDHB Construction, along with Project North Designs, Kirsch Electrical Contracting, Tenacity HVAC, and Vbros Contracting Ltd, the home is now finished and ready.

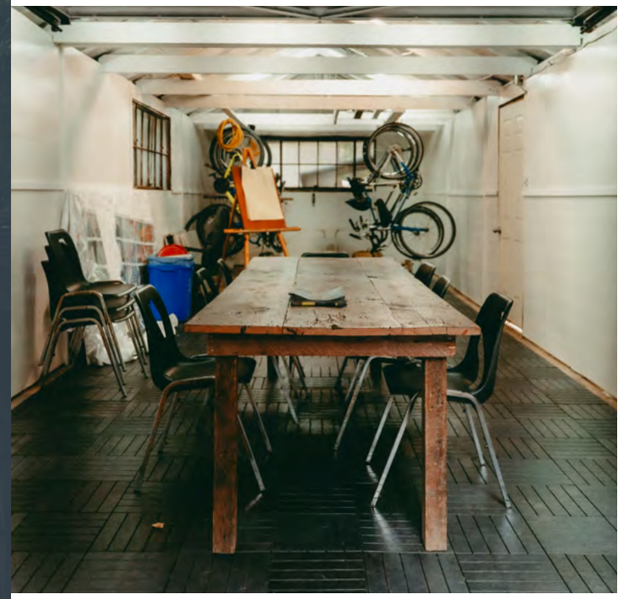
VDHB CONSTRUCTION · KIRSCH ELECTRIC CONTRACTING INC · TENACITY · PROJECT NORTH · VBROS Contracting LTD

What remains are short-term loans and the mortgage. Every future capital donation redirects resources toward programming, formation, and community for the young people who come through our doors.

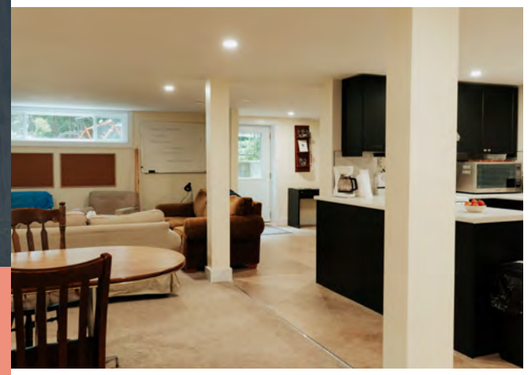


















WAYS TO GIVE AND INVEST IN ACT FIVE

Every story represented in this report has been made possible through the generosity of people who believe in providing opportunities for young adults to grow in faith, character and purpose through Act Five.

ONLINE

Join the story as a monthly donor or give a one time gift by visiting **actfive.ca/give**

E-TRANSFER

Please send e-transfers with a designation note to **finance@actfive.ca.**

CHEQUE

Please send all cheques to:
Act Five Initiatives
75 Blake St, Hamilton, ON L8M 2S7

ESTABLISHING HOME

To learn about and support our ongoing Capital Project, visit **actfive.ca/establishinghome**

ACT FIVE

75 BLAKE ST, HAMILTON, ON L8M 2S7
Charitable Registration No: 71562 7105 RR0001

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