

## Notes of HHPC Planning Group Meeting, December 7, 2015, at Minden UC, 7pm

*NOTE: These notes were taken during a fast-paced and lively discussion session. They are an accurate record of the discussion, but they have not been checked, formatted or reviewed.*

Attendance - Max Ward (minister)

- Zion - Andy Cooper (chair), Jack Cox, Mary Jane McMullen, Michelle Wolfe-Miscio
- Maple Lake - Albert and Judy Carpenter
- Minden - Don and Nancy Ballantyne, Debbie Sherwin, Janet Heffer (acting secretary)

At the Official Board meeting, Andy Cooper suggested formation of a Planning Group with representation from all three points. The purpose of the discussion group was to inform ourselves about the proposed re-organization of the United Church of Canada, at a time when the churches in our Pastoral Charge are dealing with decreased interest, attendance and revenue. Following the meeting of General Council 42, a number of remits are anticipated in the new year.

Andy reminded us that the **existing UCC structure** has four levels - National, Conference, Presbytery and Charge/Congregation. We identified the **National Church** as our “brand”, responsible for political statements, international contacts, faith statements, financial appeals in crisis situations (disasters, refugees), drawing attention to justice issues, the environment, etc. **Conference** is seen as carrying out the program of the national church with paid staff. **Presbytery** holds much of the authority over congregations including overseeing church property and renovations, reviewing mission support grants, supervising Licenced Lay Worship Leaders, settling disputes, etc. Presbytery is primarily a volunteer body but it is crucial to the current operation of our churches and denomination. Unfortunately, operating the four levels in the UCC is cumbersome and expensive. Previous attempts at restructuring have been unsuccessful, but the Church is trying once again.

The **Comprehensive Review** committee proposed that the Church cut back to a two level arrangement with a Denominational Council and Communities of Faith, effectively removing Conference and Presbytery. Those two courts have been valuable in providing supervision and experience to our churches.

At **General Council 42** in Newfoundland in August, the motion proposed by the Comprehensive Review was modified, leading to a motion suggesting a three level model with a Denominational Council, a Regional Council and Communities of Faith. Andy feels that those who challenged the Comprehensive Review’s two court motion did so with foresight and courage. At General Council 42, many changes were suggested and will result in a number of Category 3 Remits where each Pastoral Charge is entitled to one vote. It is important that our congregations be educated about the proposed changes and consequences of these remits. Not voting is considered a negative vote for the proposal.

Our future lies in the three points working together. Some paring back will be necessary due to declining attendance and revenues. At our **next meeting on January 25, 2016 at 7pm at Minden UC**, we will discuss the trends seen in our three churches (attendance numbers, age range of those attending, financial info, etc.) and do some brainstorming to move ahead to a viable future for our pastoral charge.

NOTE: *These notes were taken during a fast-paced and occasionally rambly discussion session. They are an accurate record of the discussion, but they have not been checked, formatted or reviewed for grammatical details.*