

Charge Planning Notes - March 6, 2016

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.

Welcome – Andy Cooper welcomed everyone to the meeting

Rev. Max offered an opening prayer

Attendance: (Total 24)

Rev. Max Ward

Maple Lake – Beverly Upton, Allan Upton, Albert Carpenter

Minden - Nancy Ballantyne, Don Ballantyne, Eric Casper, Jaklin Casper, Lois Deacon, Janet Heffer, Debbie Sherwin, Pat Thornett

Zion – Gail Flook, Charlene Cooper, Barb Walford-Davis, Ross McMullen, Mary Jane McMullen, Paul Rutledge, Dave Wilson, Doreen French, Wilma Heggart, Michelle Wolfe Miscio, Fred Chapple, Andy Cooper

Thank You – Andy Cooper thanked everyone (24) for coming out and thanked several people who have taken on extra responsibilities over the last few meetings, Janet Heffer, Michelle Wolfe Miscio, Charlene Cooper, Paul Rutledge, people who have contributed goodies, Debbie Sherwin and Rev. Max, Don Ballantyne, Albert Carpenter, Allan Upton, Mary Jane and Ross McMullen, Erskine Flook, and Joan and Fred Chapple.

Related Background Notes (from Andy):

1) Presbytery set up 'chat' groups in geographical clusters of churches to help the churches get together and discuss common goals and challenges. The Haliburton area chat group experienced difficulty and did not continue. This was due in part because the Highland Hills Charge has a significantly different theological outlook, and also due to the fact that many of the other churches in the group were not thinking of any form of unification while we are at the point of implementing some unification strategies. The HH Charge churches are already working together essentially as a small 'chat group' and planning for the future.

2) The United Church of Canada reorganization proposals will not be taking place until 2017. This will allow more time for the Planning Group to continue its work.

Unification 1

People and Timing

Any change will involve Presbytery, the Minister, and the Congregations.

The group proposed ideas and thoughts on getting the 3 churches together.

- The group favoured bringing the existing 3 congregations into 1 congregation.
- More joint services are a good first step.
- One approach could be to close one church, go to the other two, and eventually move to 1 church.
- Some people were concerned because when we have a joint service some members of some of the churches are not attending and the offering amount is reduced.
- The 'PAR' program should be encouraged in order to stabilize accounting.
- Communicating the location of joint services will be needed.
- Joint services seem to need something special to draw people.
- Changing our church governance was felt to be the first step in any unification plan.
- We must bring as many people 'on board' as possible to facilitate any transition. Any change will potentially result in the loss of some members.
- It was suggested that 1/3 would be for a change, 1/3 against it, and 1/3 indifferent to it.
- Combining the 3 church councils and the joint board into a single (unified) board is a good first step.
- Closing one church for the winter is another possible step.
- The UCW could pool their resources as one group.
- We need to stop trying to please everyone, have to work on a plan and go with it.
- Responsibility of the group is to share ideas with the rest of the church members.
- No one is stepping up to be the chair at Minden or for the Joint Board.
- The Worship Committee is a possible model for some of the boards. It meets as a group for most of the business, and then individual churches meet to deal with church-specific matters.
- Human resources is struggling. Combining the boards should help.
- Outreach is also a combined group operating similarly to the Worship Committee.
- Having the 5th Sunday of the month as a joint service is working well. There has been lots of positive feedback, and members are getting a chance to know each other.
- Special events are not always well attended by members of the other churches.
- Fund raising could be a combined effort.
- Communication is very important, especially if planning more joint services.
- Music at events is considered very important.
- It was suggested that a Charge Calendar be developed to show all things happening and it should be sent to everyone. (Minden is doing one now)

- A lot of the events are already in the Sunday bulletin. It was noted that there is a lot of 'event competition' from many other organizations. The Sunday Bulletin will not reach those who do not attend church.
- Some people not coming to church, how do we encourage them?

How much joint activity can we handle? What is the desired level of Commitment?

- First Sunday of every month?
- Charge choir?
- Music is a significant factor in getting people out.
- Meet somewhere else other than the 3 churches?
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- The Zion music program is working well.
- The comment was made that the church is a questionable charity from a financial viewpoint – we have very significant overhead costs. Approximately 80% of our money is going to admin and 20% to mission. We are spending much of our time and money on our buildings.
- A Three year plan proposed:
 - 2016 Plan for 1 governing body
 - 2017 Become a single point charge, and
 - 2018 The single point would be configured , sell 2 churches and manse.
- A wholesale move to Minden was suggested.
- Would it be possible to take out the pews, and have area open upstairs so it can be used for many things such as community theatre.
- People have difficulty going down stairs for functions at Minden and Maple Lake. Zion is easier, but still difficult.
- Thoughts about selling a church:
 - The 12 Mile Church was sold to the township. There are other private individuals or businesses who may be interested in purchasing a decommissioned church. Andy noted that Presbytery has been involved in a number of church sales – it may not be easy, but it can be done.
- Joint services have been a positive experience – it gets the Church full, it is inspiring for members and the preacher. We should continue every 5th Sunday and add 1st Sunday of the month. The second or third Sunday of the month was suggested in order to avoid having

two joint services in a row. Worship committee was asked to see about planning more joint services. (another Sunday of the month in addition to the 5th Sunday).

- How soon could this happen? The summer has already been scheduled for pulpit supply – perhaps in September? Zion already has the 125th anniversary planned for that month, and it will be a joint service. Continue that setup for October and on? This approach seemed to have general support, and Andy agreed to take that recommendation to the Joint Board.

Andy explained that Presbytery is important in any change to the Charge. The calling of our minister and the ‘employment’ agreement is, in fact, a three party arrangement involving our minister, the congregation, and Presbytery as equal partners. We must be careful to follow the rules so that any changes do not affect Max’s tenure in Highland Hills Pastoral Charge. A joining of the 3 congregations may trigger the need for a Joint Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) which is a study done by the charge, in conjunction with Presbytery, to assess the needs of the Charge, what it requires of a minister, and the ability of the Charge to support the proposed arrangement.

A suggestion was made at the previous meeting to bring someone in to run a work shop or session on change. Bob Root, a recently retired UC minister from Peterborough, was recently hired by Presbytery to work with pooling the efforts of small congregations, and he is a contact person who could do this. The group was informed of a meeting that he will be conducting.

**Wednesday March 16 Presbytery Gathering
At Dunsford United Church 6:30- 9:00 PM
Shared Ministry –Models to inspire people.**

Bob Root will be leading this session and people are encouraged to attend.

The group discussed having Bob come to preach some Sunday at a joint service. The topic could be ‘change’. He could also lead a discussion session. Max and Andy will be attending, and will speak to him about the possibilities. There will be carpooling from Minden church to the event at 5:30 on the 16th. People were encouraged to go.

UNIFICATION 2

Governance:

We currently have an official board to address Charge issues, plus each of the 3 congregations has a council. There is a lot of duplication (and the need for a lot of volunteers). It was suggested that we should bring the 4 groups together and phase out the separate bodies.

Ministry and Personnel, Worship, Outreach, and Pastoral Care Committees are essentially operating as Charge committees now. They conduct the majority of their business as a joint committee meeting, and break off into sub-committees as necessary to look at church-specific matters. It was felt that this approach could serve as a model for the rest of the formal committee structure.

It was pointed out that Finance and Property Committees would require some time to bring their activities together for a variety of practical reasons relating to formal ownership and taxation status. Each of the 3 churches has a 'charitable' tax status, but the Charge does not, and would have to obtain that designation.

The group felt that the Charge should implement a unified committee structure as soon as feasible for as many committees as possible, and that any committees unable to do so should determine what changes were required to make that adjustment. Andy will take this recommendation to the Joint Board.

Music:

Zion has a Music Director and a busy music program. Music is prominent and important part of the church.

Maple Lake has an organist and several music-based activities each year.

Minden's Music Director retired several years ago. They have been using a variety special music and guest musicians to help during services.

The group felt that music was an important component of joint services.

Zion's Sunday services are held at 9:00 AM to allow the Music Director time to drive to Haliburton UC where she is also the Music Director. The same time constraint would likely apply for any combined service arrangements involving the 3 churches.

Transportation:

It was suggested that carpooling and/or a bus could be considered for easing transportation between the 3 church buildings.

Communication:

Andy identified the need to begin a concerted effort to communicate the results of the Planning Group discussions to all of the other members of our Charge.

Each church has a system in place to notify members via telephone, and there is an existing email notification system at Minden. Updating and expanding the email notification system to cover the Charge would allow us to communicate with a significant portion of the Charge.

Some members do not have email, and would have to receive printed paper copies of any material. Concern was expressed about members who are not attending church and could not pick up copies of printed material.

A committee of 3 volunteers was set up to get the lists from each church organized and to plan a communication program.

Bev Upton from Maple Lake
Lois Deacon from Minden
Barb Walford-Davis from Zion

It was also suggested that we do away with the separate sections for each church in the Sunday bulletin, and that the bulletins all have the same colour.

Rev Max closed the meeting with prayer as everyone joined hands in a circle.

