

July 4, 2018

To: All Highland Hills United Church Members and Adherents

**RE: Amalgamation Update and Building Selection Vote**

The process of considering amalgamation in Highland Hills Pastoral Charge began in 2015 with a series of open planning meetings and many of the issues we are dealing with were identified at these early meetings. We have made considerable progress on becoming a combined, stronger church congregation since the January 1, 2018 amalgamation of the congregations of the former Minden and Zion United Churches to form Highland Hills United Church (HHUC). Most recently, on Sunday June 24, 2018 the majority of HHUC congregation members in attendance voted in favour of moving ahead to decide which of our two buildings – located in Carnarvon and Minden - shall become the permanent home of HHUC. A total of 73 votes were cast on June 24, 51 people voted in favour of moving ahead, 22 people voted no.

**The next step is that a building selection vote will be held on Sunday September 16, 2018 at a congregational meeting following the regular worship service at Zion in Carnarvon.**

**You may be thinking – why are we doing this? Why can't we just continue to worship in both church buildings?** The answer to those questions is that we can't afford financially to operate two buildings indefinitely – we do not have enough annual income to pay all our bills at two locations. We have been “dipping into” our financial reserves to cover our operating expenses and we could continue to do that but would use up our reserves within a few years. In addition, our congregation and therefore our volunteers are fewer in numbers and are aging. **We have a human energy deficit as well as a financial challenge.**

We also heard at the visioning sessions held in 2016 and 2017 that the congregation wants to focus on worship, and local community outreach and support. We need to put ourselves on a sustainable financial footing and focus our money and volunteer time on serving our church and our local communities – not just paying the bills for two buildings. To get there, we will consolidate into one building, and close and sell the other building. The primary considerations for a building for the future that were identified during the visioning sessions were: Suitability for worship; suitability for music; accessibility; sanctuary feel; ability to use the facility as a multifunctional space; and suitability for promotion of growth.

**How will the congregation of HHUC decide which building should be our permanent home?** Members of the congregation will vote on Sunday September 16, 2018 on a building selection recommendation made by the HHUC Unified Board. The Unified Board will recommend which building is preferred, either the building in Minden or the building in Carnarvon, with the reasons for their choice. A minimum of two-thirds of the votes cast will be required to decide on the building selection. If the building selection vote on September 16, 2018 fails to achieve the two thirds majority, plans will be made to address concerns and we will work together to prepare for another building selection vote at

a future date. The month-about worship service locations will continue until a permanent building location is selected by the congregation.

**How can you get information to help you make a choice between the building in Carnarvon and the building in Minden?** There will be two Amalgamation Information and Discussion Sessions held in preparation for the September building selection vote, one session in each of Minden and Carnarvon. The first session will be in the CE room at Carnarvon from 7-9 pm on Monday July 30, the second session will be in the lower level at Minden from 7-9 pm on Tuesday August 7. Background information will be available at these sessions such as notes from the 2015 and 2016 planning group meetings and the 2016 and 2017 visioning sessions, the 2017 Building Assessment Committee Report and Summary, summaries of input received on the 2018 monthly evaluation sheets, estimates for accessibility and other essential renovations and repairs at both buildings, United Church of Canada requirements, etc. **You are encouraged to attend an Information and Discussion Session to ask questions, provide your input, and participate in discussion.**

Most of the background information mentioned above has already been made available and can be found on the HHPC website at <http://highlandhillspc.ca/planning-group-and-integration/>. Copies of the various documents will also be available in the lower level at Minden, and in the CE room at Carnarvon.

**How can you have input during the preparation of the building recommendation?** During the month of July 2018, we are inviting HHUC members and adherents to provide their opinion on which building should be selected (Carnarvon or Minden), along with a brief rationale. Written submissions are preferred, however anyone who wishes to provide input verbally can do so by request to the Church Office (two members of the Integration Committee will visit to gather verbal input). **All members and adherents are encouraged to provide their building selection preference and brief rationale during July for consideration during preparation of a building recommendation. Submissions can be emailed to Lois Deacon, Chair, Integration Committee, at [travelling.paddler@gmail.com](mailto:travelling.paddler@gmail.com) or mailed to the attention of the Integration Committee, Highland Hills Pastoral Charge, Box 247, Minden, Ontario, K0M 2K0 or handed to any member of the Integration Committee (see below for list of members).**

If you are not a member of HHUC and want to be able to vote on September 16, please speak with Rev. Max Ward if you wish to join or transfer your membership.

Please don't hesitate to share your ideas or concerns with any member of the Integration Committee: Lois Deacon (Chair), Andy Cooper, Erskine Flook, Janet Heffer, Ross McMullen, Debbie Sherwin, Rev. Max Ward (ex officio).

We understand that choosing a permanent home for HHUC is a challenging decision. This is one more step towards having our new church be a sustainable place of faith, joy and hope for the future.

Erskine Flook, Chair, Highland Hills United Church Unified Board

Lois Deacon, Chair, Integration Committee