

Integration Committee Report – Minden UC Council August 24, 2017 and Zion UC Council September 6, 2017

As we continue to work towards amalgamating our two churches into one congregation it is important to remind ourselves that there are several reasons why we are doing this challenging work. We cannot afford financially to continue indefinitely as two separate congregations with two large and aging buildings to operate and maintain. Our congregations and therefore the volunteer bases on which we rely are fewer in numbers and are aging. Most importantly, we want our new church to be a place of faith, joy and hope for the future rather than just continuing to exist.

The Building Assessment Committee (BAC) has provided their report to the Integration Committee on the church buildings in Minden and Carnarvon and how they would fit into our vision of the future of the new Highland Hills United Church. This report, that records the capabilities and the shortfalls of each building, has not produced a clear decision of one building over another. A summary of the BAC report will be distributed at worship services on August 27 and September 3 and via email, and the full report will be posted on the HHPC website. A Question and Answer session will be held following the joint worship service at Minden on September 17 to provide an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification from the BAC committee after HHPC members and adherents have had an opportunity to study the information. The Integration Committee thanks the members of the BAC for their hard work and excellent products.

Rather than a hard deadline for the decision about which building to use for worship, our approach continues to be one of taking a series of thoughtful, careful steps as we contemplate a choice which will be best for our future. We have made considerable progress towards amalgamating Zion and Minden congregations: The amalgamation vote was held in October 2016 and was strongly in favor of amalgamation; we have a new name for the new, combined congregation; we have a new governance structure appropriate for the new, combined congregation and the charge as a whole; the music practitioners in both churches have begun to talk to each other; we are having more joint services; and existing committees are working towards coming together. Given how challenging it is to decide about which building to use in the future, our best approach is to go slowly and continue to work together on amalgamating other aspects of our churches. As of January 1, 2018, our two congregations become one and we can continue to use both church buildings. The decision about when to stop using one building is up to us. BUT – the longer we use two buildings, the longer we are paying for the upkeep of two structures.

As you know, the Worship Committee will be trying various times, locations and format of services this fall to assist with our consideration of choices. The Integration Committee recently met with the Worship Committee to propose options for 2018 for Minden and Zion to worship together. More information will follow.

The Integration Committee makes a request to Zion and Minden Councils: It would be very helpful to have a current description of where the active attendees at Zion and Minden live. The Integration Committee seeks the assistance of the Church Councils at each of Minden and Zion to develop such a description.

Respectfully submitted by Lois Deacon

August 22, 2017