

BUILDING SELECTION INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION MEETINGS

HIGHLAND HILLS UNITED CHURCH

NOTES

Mon. July 30, 2018, 7-9 PM at Zion

Attendees: Andy Cooper, Charlene Cooper, Lois Deacon, Elinor Hamilton, Gail Flook, Erskine Flook, Shawn Chevalier, Rebekah Chevalier, Cindy O'Hanley, Alice Chambers, Barbara Braker, Walter Braker, Bas Bouthoorn, Irene Alexander, Peter Alexander, Susan Pethick, Joyce Wiltshire, Katy Cox, Willie Cox, Jessie Pflug, Don Pflug, Joan Down, Bruce Down, Paul Rutledge, Joan Chapple, Fred Chapple, Ron Clark, Nerina Clark, Bruce McClennan, Chris Archer, Norma Phillips, Bob Phillips, Marybeth Wilson, David Wilson, Debbie Sherwin, Jim Hicks, Wilma Heggart, Ginny Hopkings, Glenna Koehler, Kevin Koehler, Michelle Wolfe Miscio, Mary Trepanier, Elly Malcolmson, Barb Walford-Davis, Brian Austen, Janet Heffer, Max Ward, Linda Voycey, Anne Bulford, Margo Davidson, Donna Darby, Neil Darby

WELCOME

Andy Cooper welcomed people. He noted that this is an information and discussion time, and that it will be informal. What we're looking at is what's best for the church, not us. We will come and go, but the church will stay on. He said he has been impressed by the comments that congregation members are submitting to the Integration Committee.

Andy noted that we are bound by rules and one of the most important is Holy Manners. He asked people to remember these manners during the evening. Copies were available. There are also United Church of Canada rules we must abide by. There is also a Rules of Order booklet that we follow.

People were reminded that they will be limited to a three-minute timeframe. People will be signaled at two and a half minutes.

GREETINGS AND PRAYER

Rev. Max opened with prayer.

INTRODUCTION

Lois Deacon, chair of the Integration Committee, gave a brief Introduction, history, and summary of amalgamation process. She drew attention to the document that laid out the chronology. Oct. 23, 2016, was a key date; it was when the amalgamation was approved. Lois introduced the members of the Integration Committee, who are: Lois Deacon (chair), Erskine Flook, Andy Cooper, Ross McMullen, Janet Heffer, Debbie Sherwin, and Rev. Max Ward (ex-officio). Lois thanked the committee.

VISION

Debbie Sherwin gave a brief summary of Highland Hills' vision. Debbie referred to the recent United Church of Canada 43rd General Council meeting, where commissioners expressed concern about moving from old to new structures and asked for more time for working on vision and purpose. Here at Highland Hills, we're a microcosm of the national church. We have also been going through major change and have been listening to the Spirit in our visioning.

Debbie highlighted the “flower” diagram that shows the vision of Highland Hills, with God at the centre. We will continue to focus on this vision moving forward, as well as expanding our vision.

FINANCES

Erskine Flook gave a summary of our finances. For 2018, as of June, our givings have paralleled last year’s budget, which has reduced our deficit. But heating costs were higher, and with the break-in at Minden, we added a security system. So we have \$5,000 in costs we had not budgeted for at the beginning of the year.

Erskine reviewed the financial assumptions in the document “Looking forward five years financially.” If there is a shortfall, it will have to come out of the general fund investments. Selling of a church building will take place at the end of the second year.

BUILDING REPORT

Lois summarized the building situation. We have been looking at the two buildings in terms of physical structure. She said the Integration Committee has been asked what it will cost to make the needed upgrades for each building. To answer this, she referred to the document “Costs for Upgrades.”

Fred Chapple noted that when it comes to the kitchen at Zion, one possibility is to remove the gas stove and replace it with two electrical stoves, which would mean it would be significantly less than the \$25,000 shown for a range hood.

The costs to renovate the two buildings are fairly similar. We need to think about what we need for the future when deciding on the building. What will set us up for the future?

It was noted that the UCW has about \$16,000 to go toward some aspect of building improvement.

Lois noted that regardless of which location we choose, it’s a given that we need to make improvements.

Annual operating costs of each building were asked about. The heating cost of Minden is a bit more due to there being two levels and also because the secretary is there during the week. The insurance costs in Minden are slightly less.

The parking situation was discussed. Parking at Minden is not as accessible as Zion, but more mobile people could use parking spaces farther away.

DISCUSSION

Joan Chapple noted that the Integration Committee is to be commended on our behalf. There was applause to acknowledge this. She highlighted the amount of emotion amalgamation brings out and pleaded that people’s emotions not be trampled on. She said she felt that Zion could comfortably hold the number of members. She highlighted Zion’s parking, CE building, kitchen, cemetery and that the property lends itself to accessibility renovation. She said that Minden has many possibilities for community uses and that the village has other churches.

Linda Voycey said she felt that Zion sanctuary is adequate in size, given that the church will decline in numbers each year. She suggested that we were too focused on costs, when we should be looking at the

numbers. She says we have two different congregations, summer & winter, and asked us to look at what each church will look like in February.

Bob Phillips raised the idea of using a container or school portables to house the office at a cost less than \$80,000. Is there a defunct restaurant from which we could get a secondhand range hood at a reduced cost?

Bruce McClennan said he and his wife feel Minden should be the location. When you talk about the things needed for church growth, Minden is the better choice. For music, there are better acoustics and more space for musicians. Perhaps the most important thing we talk about is promoting growth. We don't have room to grow at Zion. He said they reject the idea that we are going to lose people every year. There are opportunities for us to bring more people in. Geography and size of sanctuary are important. Another accessibility issue is geography. Minden is where there is construction. We need to think about accessibility of the minister, being closer to people in Minden. He said there is more opportunity for multi-functional space at Minden.

Mary Trepanier spoke about Knitters for Warmth at Minden and questioned whether they would drive to Carnarvon. For location, she said the UCW has a chance to raise more money from the public in Minden through things like dinners. The building can also be used by the community of Minden.

Ron Clark said that as far as growth is concerned, Carnarvon has the county to draw from. People are buying and renovating cottages and that's where Zion's growth has come from. He said he thinks the amalgamation is turning into a building discussion. We are not amalgamating for a building.

Barb Walford-Davis said Zion excels because of its emphasis on people, rather than programs. She said it's a community with intimacy. In a small church, there is care for the whole person. There are community groups using Zion: Tai Chi, weavers, etc. In the past, the stage has been used. Zion has good storage, good insulation, and updated bathrooms.

Willie Cox said she feels Carnarvon needs the church as a community hub. It is there for summer visitors. It has been used for funerals. She had the perception that Minden was planning future outreach when the building decision hadn't been made. This was responded to by Debbie Sherwin. She said the Haliburton Highlands Health Services approached Minden United Church to use its space for a community consultation, to discuss the feasibility of a drop-in centre for the Minden area.

Margo Davidson said she was told presbytery would make the decision for us. She said another suggestion is to put both buildings up for sale and then whichever one doesn't sell, we use. That way we don't have to go through this difficult decision process. It was clarified that it is not presbytery that makes the decision regarding the building.

Cindy O'Hanley raised the fact that the date of the voting in September coincides with the Terry Fox Run. She asked why we can't do a pre-vote. It was noted that people can phone their vote in during the actual meeting. She asked what happens to the contents of the church that closes. There are things that have been donated in memory of people. The response from Andy was that these items end up in other churches as appropriate. There would have to be a committee struck to give this consideration, including stained glass windows. Lois noted that there was an inventory of heritage assets done for both locations, including who they were donated by. The idea would be that as many as possible would go to the other location. The families would be contacted and if they wish them, they could keep them.

Jessie Pflug noted that if Zion is closed, there is a long stretch of highway 35 without any place to worship other than Minden and a little place in Dorset. She feels we should keep the light burning in this part of the county. Minden has other options if people want to change their church affiliation. She said that the number of Sundays Zion would be too full would be few because winter is long.

Donna Darby said she and her husband, Neil, are relative newcomers to this congregation and have no ties to either building. They have been involved in other amalgamations. It's confusing that some people feel numbers will decline in Zion while others say numbers will go up due to cottagers. If numbers go up, the space is small. She noted that Minden also has funerals and anniversaries. She noted that Minden also has community groups. She noted that we should remember that this is an emotional time. She referenced the hymn "I am the church, you are the church, we are the church." The church is not the building; it is about the people.

Jim Hicks asked, have we consulted any experts as to which building might be more saleable. Also, what would be the zoning of the two properties? Is there any possibility that either or both would be declared historical sites and wouldn't be allowed to be used for other purposes?

Erskine Flook spoke to Jessie's comment about if Zion closes, there will be fewer churches in that area, saying that we have a point in Maple Lake.

Chris Archer said she spoke from her heart, not her head. She said she felt amalgamation was wrong and she had voted against it. She said if we didn't amalgamate and that means the churches close, then let them go with dignity. She said amalgamation has caused a lot of pain and she bets that if people were asked today if they want to amalgamate, they would say no. She asked why the majority voted to amalgamate. If the answer is finances, this is unacceptable. Both congregations love their buildings and don't want to move to the other. She said we should ponder if we should scrap amalgamation.

Ron Clark said he doesn't feel the board should be making a recommendation of the building, and he doesn't feel this is right because it will sway people who are on the fence.

Marybeth Wilson said she is a fencesitter. As a retired minister, she intentionally chose not to become a member because she didn't want to appear to be swaying one way or the other. She said what she is hearing tonight is people talking about head and heart, but she feels where we should be coming from is the Spirit. Unless we pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is telling us as a congregation, then we will not go forward as a congregation.

Bruce Down said he is a cottager and is a member of neither church. He said the reason he has attended is the people.

Bruce McClennan said we are not making this decision for the people sitting here tonight, but for the people who are going to follow us 10 years from now. We need to keep in mind that many of us are not going to be here 10 years from now and it will be those coming after us.

Fred Chapple said he and Joan proposed a plan in 2007 to kick in in 2008, a four-year-plan, to increase fundraising and members. They didn't succeed in the goals. Unless there are people willing to lead, there is a very bleak future for the whole group. People are willing to work but the leadership is lacking. After four years, the plane was changed to seven years. He said people want to be where you're comfortable and know the routine. He said that we can't continue the way we are.

Shawn Chevalier said he has just joined Highland Hills. He has attended a number of churches. He is always attracted by people, not the building. He said he is dismayed by people who say they are Zion, or I am Minden. We are Highland Hills. He urged us to think as one. He sees more opportunity for this church to grow in a larger centre. He said, I think you want this church to thrive, so you can't think about a building. Think what's best for all of you. Don't think this is them against me. We're family.

Donna Darby said when she was looking for a church, one of the big reasons she and her husband joined is because you're a forward-thinking congregation. You want to promote growth and not stay the way you are.

Andy Cooper noted that there are many at presbytery watching us. We are one of the forward-thinking churches and those at presbytery are watching with interest. We are tackling a problem before it's a crisis, which puts us ahead of so many other churches that are leaving it to the bitter end.

Charlene Cooper thanked Shawn and Donna for reminding us that we are Highland Hills United Church. She said we've got to keep this spirit. She thanked everyone for sharing their comments.

Kevin Koehler, Glena's son, said he has been attending an Anglican Church in Montreal. It recently closed and he was part of the committee that was trying to decide what to do when the money was declining. He stressed the importance of making a plan now guided by the Spirit because to hold on and pretend nothing will change is not the way. Do we change our behaviour to adapt, or do we die?

Jessie Pflug asked what happens after the building vote in September. Lois said the Integration Committee hasn't done a lot of thinking about this. But we need to consult with presbytery, because the assets are there. The next steps will involve committee work. The timing is difficult to judge because we may want to do any renovations before the other building is sold so that we can use the other building during renovations. The committee felt it was presumptuous to do a lot of planning.

A question was asked about what happens to Maple Lake in all this. The answer is they are a separate church and must make their own decision as to whether they continue separate or join at some point.

The question was asked, why can't we continue as we are, alternating buildings monthly. One concern is that the money will run out. The point was also raised that the national church structure will be changing in 2019, with presbyteries no longer going to be an entity. If we make the decision regarding which building this year, we would still deal with this presbytery. If later, there will be new structures and new rules.

Joan Chapple said she was refreshed by hearing the comments of members who are newcomers. They are talking about people. She said, we have to come along. God is working amongst us and through us, and somehow we have to open the gates and let him in.

PRAYER AND CLOSURE

Rev. Max noted that at a recent trustee meeting they were looking at time horizons and people said they wouldn't be around in 10 years, and that startled him. He wants to see us succeed. He wants us to listen to the Spirit and do our best. He closed in prayer.