

June 16, 2017

TO: All Highland Hills Pastoral Charge Members and Adherents

RE: INTEGRATION UPDATE

As you know, our Pastoral Charge undertook an amalgamation vote last fall, and at that time Minden and Zion United Churches voted strongly (95% and 82% respectively) to combine forces going forward with the amalgamation taking effect January 1, 2018. Maple Lake United Church chose not to combine with the other two churches at this time. This decisive vote to amalgamate began the formal process for Zion and Minden to move ahead together as one congregation, and at the same time we continue to value Maple Lake as an important part of our pastoral charge.

We have made significant progress towards becoming a combined, stronger church congregation. At the annual Highland Hills Pastoral Charge Congregational meeting on March 5, 2017 we picked a name for the new congregation, Highland Hills United Church. At the same meeting we agreed on a governance organization that combined the Boards of the Pastoral Charge and the Highland Hills United Church into one Unified Board, and retained Maple Lake's Council and its participation in the Unified Board for Pastoral Charge matters.

Careful and thoughtful work continues to be done by the people of our congregations related to the various components of amalgamation. One group is assessing both buildings, once they have completed their work there will be an opportunity for congregations to hear about their findings and ask questions. Another group is looking at our music programs and ways to find synergies. The Worship Committee is working with the music folks on a plan for the fall, which will include more combined services, and opportunities to try various approaches to services and music – stay tuned for more information. We have held two facilitated visioning sessions to help us chart our path for the future; the most recent session being on May 13, 2017. In addition, the various existing church committees are finding ways to meet together to learn more about each other.

The October 23, 2016 vote settled the amalgamation question. There will be other questions brought to the congregations such as which building will we use in the future. As we contemplate these challenging questions, we need to keep in mind that we are part of a larger church organization; we are connected to Presbytery,

Conference and the General Council, and are governed by the Manual of The United Church of Canada. All congregational property, both real (e.g. land and buildings) and personal (e.g. money, investments, furniture, and equipment), is held in trust by congregations on behalf of the United Church of Canada.

Amalgamating two churches is hard work. As we focus on the intricate details and challenges, it's important to remind ourselves that there are several reasons we are doing this: 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; and we want our new church to be a place of faith, joy and hope.

Many thanks to all of you who are playing a part in the various amalgamation tasks – Your time, energy and skills are greatly appreciated. It is inspiring that people have quickly stepped up to take on tasks and give support. Many of these volunteers are seniors who would be happy if change wasn't necessary, but they are inspired and feel a responsibility to help move our church forward so that it will continue to be a presence in our community far into the future.

Erskine Flook, Highland Hills Pastoral Charge Official Board Chair

Ted Koehler, Zion United Church Council Chair

Janet Heffer, Minden United Church Council Chair

Lois Deacon, Integration Committee Chair

This message is sent to you by Highland Hills Pastoral Charge, PO Box 247, Minden ON K0M 2K0 on behalf of Maple Lake, Minden, and Zion United Churches.