

August 30, 2018

## Dear Highland Hills United Church Congregation Members and Friends

**Members are invited on September 16, 2018 to attend a Highland Hills United Church congregational meeting at Zion, after the regular church service, to vote to choose a permanent home for the congregation.**

The process of considering amalgamation in Highland Hills Pastoral Charge began in 2015 with a series of open planning 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). The vote to select a permanent home is one more step in this process.

**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.**

As we think about our future as HHUC, we must acknowledge the role that both Minden and Zion buildings played in the past when they acted as focal points for their communities; the memories that were created by the congregations within their walls; and the sanctuaries that provided spaces for praising God, encouraging the congregations to follow the teachings of Jesus, and being attentive to the nudges of the Spirit. Our past has prepared us to create a new shared future that honours and builds on that past.

**Your Unified Board recommends that the church building in Minden be considered as the preferred location for the permanent home of HHUC.**

This recommendation is in no way intended to take away from the merits or significance of the Zion building, but rather reflects our perspective in terms of which location has the best potential for the future success of HHUC.

A brief rationale for this recommendation is as follows:

**Use of the Facility as Multifunctional Space:** The sanctuary at Minden is more effective for multifunctional use and offers opportunities for meetings, musical offerings, plays, etc. and there are opportunities for partnerships with the arts community.

**Worship:** The larger sanctuary at Minden is amenable to a variety of worship opportunities and has more seating.

**Music:** The current music program, and potential future program, can function well at Minden. The acoustics are very good, and the space is significantly larger. The larger choir loft and sanctuary can accommodate a wide range of music options and multiple groups at one time.

**Promoting Growth:** The ability to promote growth for HHUC is supported by the size of the Minden sanctuary and choir loft, and suitability for use as multifunctional space.

**Outreach:** The varied existing interest/outreach groups function well at Minden but it is recognized that the opportunity to service the existing interest groups at Zion may be lost. In the town of Minden there are greater opportunities for partnerships with other charitable groups, service groups, and community organizations.

**Accessibility:** The sanctuaries at both Zion and Minden can be made accessible. The choir loft at Minden can readily be made accessible, however the choir loft at Zion is limited in size and not well suited to accessibility modifications. The existing office space at Minden is convenient for people wishing to access the Minister and Charge Secretary.

(Over)

## Next Steps Following September 16 Building Selection Vote

If the September 16, 2018 building selection vote achieves a 66% majority in favour of one building:

The Unified Board will meet to discuss the results of the vote and determine an action plan and schedule for moving forward. Discussions will take place with respect to furniture, memorial items, windows and other features, and possible modifications to the selected building. The month about services will continue into October while a decision is made to start services at the permanent location. A special closing service will be arranged at a suitable time for the building which is designated as surplus. Permission will be requested from Presbytery to put the surplus building up for sale.

The following committees will be tasked/formed:

Renovations to selected building: Existing Joint Property Committee to be tasked to develop a priority list and plans to address critically needed renovations

Disposition of non-selected building: Unified Board and Trustees to develop disposition plans for both building and heritage items, including communications with United Church of Canada

Addressing emotions, feelings and grieving of congregation members: A new committee will be formed to work with Pastoral Care to develop and implement plans to assist congregation members

New Vision for HHUC: Form a committee charged with continuing work on a new vision for HHUC, including eventual development of new mission and vision statements.

If the vote fails to achieve the two thirds of the votes cast:

Plans will be made to address concerns and work together to prepare for the building selection vote at a future date. The month-about service locations will continue until a permanent building location is selected.

### Details About Voting:

We prefer members to attend this congregational meeting to fully participate in this serious decision but, if you are not able to attend the September 16th building vote at Zion UC in person but would still like to participate in the building vote, you may join the meeting by conference call at approximately 10:45am. When it is time to vote, you will be asked to say your name and vote on the conference line, as a result it will not be secret. Your vote will be recorded on a ballot and included with everyone else's votes. Please note that if participating by conference call and there are technical difficulties, it may become evident that your vote is not able to be received and recorded.

The conference calling process is ...

Dial the toll-free telephone number **1-888-224-1908**, and you'll be prompted to key/punch in the participant code which is **88285822#** then to give your name. Note you are now on a speaker and everyone can hear you. Once you have been acknowledged please quietly wait as the meeting proceeds. You will then be asked for your vote as the ballots are being distributed.

Thank You,

Erskine Flook

Chair, Highland Hills United Church Unified Board