

Message from the Chair of the Unified Board

2018 Annual Report

This is the traditional time of year to look back and review our accomplishments, then look forward to our vision and hope for the future. But let's not stop looking back at only at 2018. Over the past four years we have been on a journey, first to explore and consider amalgamating the three churches of the Highland Hills Pastoral Charge. Then, after two of the congregations decided to amalgamate, they talked about, planned and made difficult choices for change, culminating in the decision in September to select the former Minden United Church building as their place of worship. Over the past four years your Board, the various committees, and the Congregation have done a lot of hard, stressful work and made some very difficult decisions in order to move forward. The documents, A Year In Review for 2017 and 2018, list many of the actions completed in support of the integration process. All the while our sister congregation, Maple Lake, has been supportive and willing to make adjustments to accommodate the new Highland Hills United Church.

I am certain along this journey we have had many of the same emotions that the Israelites had as they travelled to the Promised Land. Anxious to move on, excited with possibilities, full of awe, fearful of an unknown future, and some disappointments. I believe that the process has been thoughtful, honest and open during which people have expressed their fears, differences, and dreams; and from that we have made those difficult decisions. Thank you to all of the many people who put in long hours attending and leading meetings, resolving issues, preparing information, identifying assets, sorting music, etc. Also a thank you to all the people that said "thank you" or gave a "hug" to rejuvenate those workers as they became weary or stressed with their tasks.

One might use the analogy that we have now crossed the Red Sea and there is no turning back. We have passed the transition stage and have now entered the building stage. As Rev Doug Norris stated in one of his Advent Meditations, "we now have to cope with the reality of waiting as we move ahead". We have a list of our vision of things we are going to do, but they are not all going to be started on January 1, 2019. Fortunately over the past 4 years we have been blessed with people who have not hesitated to ask "what can I do to help move us forward to the place I want my church to be". I am certain more people will come forward to continue to help build the new Highland Hills United Church.

I felt the prayer at the New Member service of December 2018 speaks to our journey and the vision we are working towards. "Thank you, Lord, for calling us and setting our feet on the way. Walk with us on this shared journey, as we move into an unknown future. We trust that even though we cannot see our destination, we know that we are not alone in the hills and valleys of life. May we continue to grow together, as we serve with joy and gladness."

Erskine Flook

Chair, Highland Hills Unified Board