

St. Paul's United Church
November Status Update
November 19th, 2023

Present: Jane Blakely, Kodie Powell, Ann & Harold Raper, Bill & Lois Paterson, Carole Peacock, Meghan Roebuck (Minute taker), Debbie Allison, Rose-Hannah Gaskin, Tammy Coughlan, Debbie West, Andrew Steeves, Noreen Barwise, Lois Walker-Gillin, Ron Naugler, Ralph Simpson, Sharon Pond, Ann Krause, Erin Webb, Blaine Irving, Andrea Allen, Marilyn Brewer, Greg Morton, Patty Trail, Jane Banks, Cathy & John Davis, Mary Stickles, Chris Grant, Kelly Simpson, Barb & Mel McGuigan, Hugh Lautard, Alanna Palmer, Donna Chauvin, Rev. Michelle Armstrong. **On Zoom:** Joan Shaw, Roger Miller, Sadie Miller, Florence Bartlett
Regrets: Bud Bird

Call to Order: Alanna at 12:02

Opening Prayer: Rev. Michelle

Recap of the Challenges: Alanna

The last status update on October 15th, Alanna shared the challenges St. Paul's faced as a community of faith. Jane shared our financial picture and an update on the status of the Kindred Works plans, for which we were hopeful. Rev. Michelle told us where the Downtown United Project stood, and Andrew presented the estimates for repairs needed to the sanctuary. Feedback and thoughts we requested. Since then, many meetings have taken place to explore an exhaustive list of possible solutions to address our challenges.

Who are the core Leadership Team: Alanna

Alanna presented the diverse group of individuals comprising the Leadership Team:

- The Leadership Team
 - Our elected Board Members: Donna Chauvin (Chair), Debbie Allison, Blaine Irving, Jane Blakely (Treasurer), Tammy Coughlan, Roger Miller.
 - Our elected Committee Members: Patty Trail (Property), Ron Naugler (Finance), Cathy Davis (Kindred Works Development).
 - Our elected Trustees: Andrews Steeve (Acting Chair), Mel McGuigan (Downtown United), Lois Walker, Bill Paterson, Carole Peacock, Frank Goddard, Alanna Palmer (Secretary).
 - Our Minister: Rev. Michelle Armstrong.
 - Our Facilitator: Rev. Rose-Hannah Gaskin.

The Leadership Team is moving ahead in a timely manner with a logical, rational, and pragmatic mindset.

Actions taken so far: Alanna

The most recent round of discussion came about from the Trustees alerting the Board that there are not enough Capital funds necessary for the critical repairs to the sanctuary. Subsequent meeting stirred imaginations about possible things St. Paul's could do to carry on. Alanna shared the conclusions the Team came to as a result of their meetings.

- **The Truths:** After much discussion, reflection and prayer, the Leadership Team reached consensus:
 - The Church is not the building. There are many options for fellowship and worship apart from our building.
 - We cannot afford to repair the building and even if we could, our small congregation cannot afford to maintain the building.

- The building is getting in the way of our mission.
- We looked to Kindred Works for assistance, but it is proceeding too slowly to be of any help. We still have not received the final official copy of the “Letter of Intent” and no legal documents have been signed.
- **Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters:**
 - The Board sent a letter to the Region outlining our current situation: an update regarding Kindred Works and the challenges of not finding a contractor to repair the sanctuary roof.
 - Included was a motion from the Trustees about the Capital funds only being utilized for critical maintenance.
 - Advice and support were requested on how to navigate the next steps.
 - We received the Regional Property Committee handbook that outlines the policies and procedures in place around congregational property. The Region expressed that their role is to ensure the policies and procedures are being followed and help guide congregations through the process of their choice.

Jane shared the input received from a consultation with City Planning and Heritage on November 8th.

- **City of Fredericton: Heritage Manager & Senior Planner**
 - The city values heritage assets such as St. Paul’s: the heritage significance of the sanctuary and perhaps even Fraser Memorial Hall.
 - The Housing Project buildings are not considered high value from a heritage or urban design/density perspective.
 - What could be approved for redevelopment is the entire site, keeping the entire property as a package.
 - A project on this site reusing the heritage components and making better use of a prime location.
 - The recommendation was to cast a wide net with “Requests for Expression of Interest” to as many developers and designers as possible and attract interest from across the country.
 - This will take work and financial resources to attract the right developer.

Donna presented an invitation sent from St. Andrew’s on October 19th to both St. Paul’s and Wilmot, to discuss a Shared Ecumenical Ministry.

- **St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church:** Donna presented an invitation sent from St. Andrew’s on October 19th to both St. Paul’s and Wilmot, to discuss a Shared Ecumenical Ministry.
 - St. Andrew’s expressed facing the same challenges as St. Paul’s and Wilmot. A meeting to open discussions was set for November 7th.
 - At the meeting, St. Andrew’s shared similar challenges around demographics and financial needs. St. Paul’s shared our struggles with our building.
 - Shared Ecumenical Ministry can take many forms: worshiping and serving God is a unified way while maintaining their denominational identity and connections, sharing a program, mission, ministry, or building.
 - It is more than just sharing services in the summer, there is a formal process in the development of a shared ministry plans and a handbook to help congregations negotiate the creation of agreements.
 - St. Andrew’s building is smaller and newer and congregation about the same size.
 - The present task is identifying if this is something our congregation wants to explore.

The recommended course of action: Andrew

- **Recommendation:** Andrew presented the recommendation from the Leadership Team:
 - Having explored many avenues for a continued future in our historic sanctuary, the Leadership Team have concluded that we do not have the money, human resources, or time to create such a future for our congregation.
 - We must face the fact that as sad as it is, we must let go our longtime place of worship and seek a new and different future which we believe God had planned for us.
 - The only realistic option is to sell the building and property, protecting the heritage aspect of the building while it is being converted or redeveloped.

Gathering feedback: Alanna

- **2 Questions:** Alanna ask people to group together and answer 2 questions:
 - 1) What do you find interesting and energizing about this presentation?**
 - **Responses:**
 - Promising with potential of collaboration, cooperation with St. Andrew's and Wilmot
 - Force ourselves to be energized.
 - We have to do something.
 - Face the facts
 - Reach out to other churches to learn what challenges they had and how they were addressed.
 - St. Andrew's building is newer, smaller, brick not stone.
 - They came to us – amalgamate with St. Paul's and Wilmot
 - Research, so far, is interesting and energizing.
 - Casavant organ is the best one in Atlantic Canada
 - There is a lot of energy and will to succeed.
 - Impressed with what has been done so far: valuable opinions, good research Energizes our group – the dedicated, knowledgeable, and well-spoken leadership! Valuable Property! and Heritage
 - The Hope that is in this and that God is an integral part of this plan.
 - The enthusiasm of the City Planner and Heritage Manager.
 - The clarity expressed, no ambiguity.
 - We're not sticking our heads in the sand and we're confident that a plan will emerge.
 - Our neighbourhood churches are in the same position, and we are talking, cooperating and sharing ideas.
 - Meeting has answered a lot of our questions.
 - The presentation was very interesting, all presenters spoke well.
 - There are options.
 - Sad but excited.
 - Not doing the same things over again, choosing to act.
 - The age of people is a big concern.
 - Don't want to leave debt to the next generation.
 - 2) What additional information would you like to have?**
 - **Responses:**
 - What does selling look like?
 - What does the potential partnership with St. Andrew's & Wilmot look like?
 - How can we grow the congregation? (succession planning of the congregation)

- Talk to other United Churches in our area - have we done this?
- How do we help keep the church alive?
- Keep us informed.
- Connect with other city churches – their experience?
- What level of support can we expect from Region and National Church?
- More detailed information from City Hall about the process of Expression of Interest.
- How would we transition to a shared ecumenical experience?
- What are the next steps?
- Professional Appraisal of our real estate?
- What is the property worth?
- The uses of the building?
- How do we ask for proposals?
- Transparency exists but how to get feedback from those who don't attend meetings?
- What would the City allow for development on the property?
- Is St. Paul's or St. Andrew's the right building?
- What about the social enterprises (housing, parking, rentals) Are all churches equal in revenue?
What effect would losing those have on overall revenues?
- What are St. Andrew's and Wilmot thinking about ecumenical ministry?
- How to stay responsible for Social Development clients?
- What about other Canadian churches?

▪ **Alanna read a poem forwarded by Roger Miller:** From the book by Mary Wells

WHEN THE POWER OF MONEY MEETS THE POWER OF THE CROSS,

Take a lesson from God's eagles. The mother eagle builds a nest with rocks and sticks.

Then she lines the inside with feathers and soft animal fur. This cozy nest provides a warm shelter, where the eagles are nurtured and protected. Once they've grown, the mother eagle pulls the nest apart. With rocks and sticks protruding, the nest is no longer comfortable for the young eagles. Instead, they start to look beyond the nest.

For what they need.

The eaglets don't know how to fly when they first leave the nest. Instead, the mother takes them into the sky and releases them. These little free-falling eagles must be terrified, thinking their mother is trying to kill them. But mother eagle never lets them get hurt. If they don't get their wings right away, she's there just before they hit the ground to catch them. Then she takes them back up to the heights for another try. For a time, the nest (church building) provided shelter, but then our creator starts to claw at this nest even while we cling for security to broken eggshells and the torn-up nest. It can feel so uncomfortable, even painful, as things fall apart right in our very homes.

But take heart, treasures!

You aren't being pushed out of the nest to fall. God knows what's next and he's right beside you, all the way.

Remember, what feels like free- falling is really freedom rising.

It's soaring time!!

Next Steps: Donna

- **Show of Support:** Donna asked the group to show, by way of raising hands, support to move forward with the recommendation to sell the building and start the process. Most people raised their hands, 4 did not.

Closing: Rev. Michelle said a closing prayer and the meeting adjourned.