



Summary Notes for North Burlington Cluster of Churches' Meeting on October 12, 2016

Key Outcomes and Common Themes

Immediate Action Items:

One member from each church will report to their congregation on Sunday, October 15th about tonight's meeting

Marilyn, Donna and Keith are preparing a Common Prayer for all congregations

Summary of findings from breakout groups' sessions:

1. What are the beginning details of the proposed vision?

Is there a joint venture to bring us together?

Developing a relationship: joint services/pulpit exchange; joint services provide energy

Keep presence in the communities to maintain connections

Sharing resources – administration, joint outreach – spread costs and work among broader group

Staffing should be gift-oriented vs. geography-oriented

Clarify vision further

2. What would you like to see happen in the coming months to work towards the vision of being one church with one administrative umbrella and joint ministerial guidance?

Develop a common name and common website

Use social media to communicate

Identify outreach project for all congregations to work together on

Create contemporary service; invite outsiders inside

Form committees – finance, ministry and personnel, property and facilities

Create one board for the four churches; determine the decision making authority/hierarchy; decide who will make decisions on steps to move forward

Make more intentional use of our skill sets

Get politics out in the open

3. What concerns do you have about the process and how can these be addressed?

How to talk about this concept of 'one church/one body' with congregations in ways that open doors rather than close them

Reassure people, engage and communicate with the congregations

Time sensitivity of some of the churches

People involved and HR issues

Set realistic goals and timelines – but set a deadline!

Next meeting date: Monday, October 24, 2016 at St. Stephen United Church, 7:00 pm to discuss next steps and the formation of a new council

Detailed Notes

Rev. Steve Huntley and Rev. Darryl Webber opened the session with a hymn followed by a prayer by Steve. Dale Martin, meeting chair, welcomed everyone and outlined briefly the purpose of the meeting and emphasized that no decisions have been made about the proposed vision. He then introduced Jill Strapp, the facilitator for the meeting. Jill provided some background information about the support provided by EDGE for missional and property work that congregations are undertaking as well as an overview about how churches are “re-thinking church”.

A board member from each church gave a brief summary about where they are in the process:

1. Lowville United (Keith)

Lowville wants to stay in the community and plans to grow but needs help and support to do so. They have to turn their “way of being church on its head”.

2. Nelson United (Mike)

Nelson has been in the community for 159 years – it is a rural, multi-generational church, and the population is dwindling. They have significant endowments which are a blessing and a curse. The church is running a deficit now, there is no Sunday school, it is in a poor location and it is not wheelchair accessible. They will be closing their doors and would like to amalgamate with another congregation. The congregation needs to figure out what to do with the property.

3. St. Stephen United (Heather)

The church engaged EDGE a number of years ago to develop a new mission and vision and are getting closer to resolution. They want to re-build and have a new church for the community. The church is still very viable.

4. Tansley United (Dale)

Tansley has become much more integrated into the community and the church has great strengths. They are looking for a way to build on their community outreach and improving their connection with other churches.

The ministers’ journey: (Rev. Allison Playfair)

A few years ago Allison and a few other ministers began talking about how they can better use their time and resources in ministering to their communities. Steve and Darryl have continued these conversations with her. They discussed how they could divide up so that someone who is great at doing ministry, working with youth, working with lay leadership etc. would work with more than one congregation. The pool of people who are actively involved in ministering in the church is getting smaller. The ministers are hoping that the members will take ownership of the North Burlington visioning process because ministers come and go but congregations are the mainstay.

Summary of Break out groups

Small groups of four to seven people met to discuss the following:

1. What are the beginning details of the proposed vision?
2. What would you like to see happen in the coming months to work towards the vision of being one church with one administrative umbrella and joint ministerial guidance?
3. What concerns do you have about the process and how can these be addressed?

Group summaries:

Group 1 (Donna)

Other new congregations setting up in N. Burlington:

Non-denominational, Romanian, Anglicans, Muslims

Details = too many buildings but it seems that growth is hampered without a property base (too costly)

Current members who will see their church 'move', will probably stop church affiliation = 'demoralised'.

If the building can still maintain some functionality, it would help

Adopt a new name – e.g. Escarpment United – each church with a special name and speciality: purpose, music, ministry, community (mom's group), hospitality (kitchen)

No saying: "but we did it this way"

Must use social media including Facebook and website

Kids looking for values

Invite outsiders inside, e.g. Guelph School of Landscape Architects

Knowing that church is not relevant to most of today's populace

Group 2 (Mike)

Does not make sense to support four buildings

How sustainable are we with multiple buildings?

Joint services provide more energy and enthusiasm

If churches choose to amalgamate, need to discover what the core strengths of each congregation are

Group 3 (Allison)

1. Vision:

Do we need structural/physical space or philosophy or approach?

Discuss Mission – reaching into community

Is there a joint venture to bring us together?

Developing a relationship – joint services/pulpit exchange

Church goers are 'doers' – need spiritual growth tied to that

How to continue to serve various communities?

What is meaningful to community that we are also passionate about?

Worship/intergenerational/alternative spiritual growth development

Developing a unified body as model of possibility of diverse communities working for 'Common Good'

Keep presence in the communities to maintain connections

Worshipping together – Outreach hubs, moveable feast?

More collaboration of worship/youth/Christian Ed/outreach

Joining each other in ministries

Eric Law – Currency of Gifts

2. Coming Months

Identify outreach project for all congregations to work together on

Create contemporary service – alternative form of gathering that will be inviting for spiritual nourishment of wider community

Platform for addressing current struggles faced by community – families, singles, work i.e. talks, spiritual, issues, Round tables
common name
common website

3. Concerns

How to talk about this concept of ‘one church/one body’ with congregations in ways that open doors rather than close them

Reassure people

Working together

Small groups

Common committee meeting together

Repeat, repeat, repeat possibilities

Invite conversations

Report to congregation on Sunday about this meeting

We need to plan process carefully

How to recognize and address ‘burnout’

Set realistic goals and timeline

Exciting opportunity!!!

Group 4 (Dale)

1. (Physically) coming together

Worship interaction

Sharing resources – administration, joint outreach

2. Next few months:

Working group to develop new name for umbrella group i.e. North Burlington United churches – with each church named within that group - Tansley, Lowville, Nelson, St. Stephen

Form Committees – finance, ministry and personnel, property and facilities

3. Concerns:

Doing things the right way the first time

Engage and communicate with the congregations

Group 5 (Mark)

Multiple buildings/one building

Hub for the group with tentacles in each community

Each with its own culture/community needs

Need a church and physical building in the community of Lowville as distance is far for community to engage in “south/north Burlington”)

Staffing should be “gift” oriented vs. geography oriented (looking for excellence in each gift to serve broader community)

Looking to spread the work/cost among broader group – cost savings (i.e. co-op savings) getting building to not be the “burden”

Utilizing resources from each community/church so we don’t duplicate efforts – for example, having food

programs in four separate churches

Getting politics out in the open – “elephant in the room”

2. Next months:

Look at creating 1 board for the 4 churches

Need more detailed vision

Determine how many councils are required and what is the vision they follow

Determine the decision making authority/hierarchy

Who in our groups will make decisions on the steps to move forward

More intentional use of our skill sets

3. Concerns:

How do we decide on resourcing? (who gets appointed or not to what roles?)

Timeline – how long do we spend looking for decision? When to cut it off?

People involved – HR issues of our ministers and staff

Time sensitivity of some of the churches

“take over” syndrome vs. true merger – how to avoid former

Suggestion: Provide a common prayer for all four churches

Action: Marilyn, Donna and Keith will select a common prayer for this Sunday’s services

Meeting closed with a prayer by Steve. Adjourned at 9:00 pm

The Council plans to meet on Monday, October 24 at 7:00 pm to discuss next steps and the formation of a new council.