

## **Final Report and Recommendations of the St. Andrew's and Deer Park Moving Forward Committee**

**April, 2020**

### **1. Introduction**

In 2019 the Councils of both Deer Park United Church (DPUC) and St. Andrew's United Church (SAUC) voted to form a committee with representatives from both congregations to look at future options and opportunities in the relationship between Deer Park and St Andrew's as it is defined in the current Sharing Agreement. The Moving Forward Committee, comprised of Jocelyn Gelinas (Chair of DPUC Council), John Palmer (Chair of SAUC Council), Reverend Tom Melvin (minister of DPUC), Reverend Hillary Van Spronsen (minister of SAUC), Richard Betts (member of SAUC Council) and Jan van Egteren (member of DPUC Council), have met a number of times since February of 2019.

The committee's first step was to engage with both congregations to determine how each felt about the current sharing arrangement and to elicit thoughts on how the congregations might move forward in the future. A simple four-question survey was constructed:

- 1) How and Why do you participate in this faith community?
- 2) What has been your experience of the relationship between Deer Park and St. Andrew's United Churches?
- 3) Going forward how do you see growth in Deer Park and St. Andrew's United Churches?
- 4) What will the next steps in the journey look like for Deer Park and St. Andrew's United Churches?

The committee held 5 group discussions with members of the 2 congregations (1 joint session and 2 additional sessions for each congregation) reaching 120+ participants. In addition, an online survey form was made available for all interested parties throughout December 2019.

### **Summary of the Survey Results**

- a. There was a consensus that both congregations wanted to find ways to move forward together. Dissolution of the sharing arrangement was not presented as an option by anyone.
- b. While there was a NOT unanimous indication that both congregations should amalgamate, there was definite majority that indicated SAUC and DPUC should become a single entity.
- c. For those that did not mention amalgamation or becoming a single entity, there was a definite desire for the two congregations to move closer together, to eliminate duplication, to initiate more programs/ministries together, to streamline operations where possible and to strengthen the bonds between the two congregations.
- d. There was also a strong majority that indicated the relations between the congregations had improved over time, after some initial awkwardness, and that continued closer cooperation and stronger interpersonal relationships were important.
- e. The value of being part of the 'church community and family' was mentioned often.
- f. The value of the combined choirs was mentioned often but that there was a desire expressed by some that the music program be expanded to include opportunities for all ages.

- g. Some people expressed the concern that if the congregations were to combine that the SAUC funds currently used for the Regional Ministry programs NOT be affected in any way.
- h. There were a number of comments that dealt with identity should the congregations become one. The majority of opinions expressed said that should the congregations decide to combine into a single entity a new name should be chosen for that new entity and that both congregations should let go of some of their traditional practices. There was a desire for a rebirth and a new expanded vision and mission for the new entity rather than a continuation of past practices and visions.
- i. Finally, there were some concerns expressed about the ability of the Deer Park building to accommodate all staff and programs should the congregations decide to amalgamate. A few opinions suggested that the congregations look at moving to a new or different building.

## **2. Some facts that the Moving Forward Committee has taken into account**

- a. SAUC is essentially locked into its lease arrangement for the St. Andrews Centre until October 31, 2023 and must give the landlord six months termination or non-renewal notice. This fact has implications for immediate space requirements in the Deer Park building should the congregations decide to amalgamate as well as potentially providing additional program space during a period of transition.
- b. Reverend Hillary Van Spronsen will be leaving for a 12 month maternity leave in late May. St. Andrew's is looking for a half time replacement during her maternity leave. Hillary has indicated that it is her intention to return to St. Andrew's after her leave and participate in the development and implementation of any plans that are contemplated.
- c. Reverend Tom Melvin has announced his retirement date as June 30, 2021. This fact has implications for the timing of amalgamation should the congregations decide to do so.
- d. Under the terms of the SAUC agreement with what was formerly Calgary Presbytery and now the Chinook Region, the use of the SAUC funds set aside for the Regional Ministry programs cannot be changed by SAUC or any successor organization that SAUC may become. In other words, amalgamation between DPUC and SAUC cannot change the purpose and management structure of the Regional Ministry funds in anyway. (Note: The St. Andrew's Regional Ministries Terms of Reference (TOR) will need to be updated if amalgamation goes ahead as the current TOR refers to St. Andrew's in many areas.)

## **3. Deliberations of the Moving Forward Committee**

- a. The Committee felt that there were four options for consideration for the future. These were:
  - Dissolution of the current sharing arrangement and a parting of the ways between the congregations
  - Continue indefinitely with the current sharing arrangement - maintain the status quo option.
  - Combine the two congregations in a two point pastoral charge arrangement, i.e., two separate congregations, two separate Councils plus one combined

Council to deal with areas of mutual concern, no combining of assets, two separate worship services but shared staff (particularly the Ministerial staff) and some shared programming.

- Amalgamation of the two congregations.

**4. Each of the four options are discussed below.**

**a. Dissolution of the existing shared services arrangement**

Dissolution was rejected by the Committee. Virtually all of the opinions expressed in the congregational surveys indicated that this was not a viable option. As noted above, many comments indicated the exact opposite, that the congregations find ways to move closer together. The committee concluded that dissolution was not at all a viable option.

**b. Maintain the Status Quo**

While there were some sentiments expressed in the surveys that seem to indicate the status quo could be a viable option, the vast majority of the opinions suggested that the congregations desired a closer relationship and a desire for a single entity. Considering that:

- maintaining the status quo is not a 'Move Forward', although it might be considered at least a temporary safe haven;
- the status quo was likely to lead to stagnation of the two faith communities;
- any perceived differences in style, culture or any potential issues were unlikely to be resolved completely and potential opportunities to work closer together would be difficult as long as separate governance processes and separate leadership continued to exist;
- the status quo would not take advantage of the combined strength of two faith communities;
- the committee has decided not to recommend maintaining the status quo as a viable option at this time.

**c. Two Point Pastoral Charge**

A two point pastoral charge is an option that could be seen as a Move Forward to developing a closer relationship between the two Faith Communities. Reverend Hillary has experience with a two point charge arrangement in Ontario. A two point pastoral charge is usually characterized as sharing staff but maintaining two separate congregations. Essentially, a two point pastoral charge is often set up for congregations that want to maintain their separate identities, worshipping practices and governance structures, but can no longer afford a full time ministry position so the costs of a full time Minister are shared between the two congregations. Typically, then the Minister (or Ministerial Team) is asked to perform two services each Sunday and to respond to requests for pastoral care for each congregation. A single Sunday service is also an option. Often some programs or ministries may be combined, e.g. one bible study group instead of two, and there is usually a combined Council that deals primarily with the financial arrangements to cover the cost of the single Minister (or team) and to deal with personnel issues associated with the single Minister (or team). After considerable

discussion on this alternative, the committee decided not to recommend this alternative to the congregations for two main reasons:

- The Committee felt that the current shared services arrangement between SAUC and DPUC actually goes beyond what a two point pastoral charge would normally encompass as far as the congregations working together in a close relationship. A two point pastoral charge could be seen as a step backwards from where the two congregations are today;
- Finally, the Committee strongly felt that any move forward by the two congregations should not be based on financial requirements. While this is a consideration obviously, the Committee feels that the desire to move forward into a closer relationship as expressed in the surveys was based more on a desire to grow our congregations - to make two strong congregations even stronger and to take advantage of the strengths of each congregation and combine them to achieve synergies that make our two communities of faith more than twice as strong as the sum of the parts.
- For these reasons The Committee is not recommending any further consideration of a two point pastoral charge relationship for SAUC and DPUC.

#### **d. Amalgamation**

The Moving Forward Committee recommends that SAUC and DPUC commence the process of exploring and developing plans that would lead to the amalgamation of our two Faith Communities into a single entity.

The remainder of this section deals with recommendations for some of the major issues that need to be addressed in the amalgamation process.

- A Joint Amalgamation Steering Committee comprised of 5 members from each congregation be formed to establish guiding principles and expectations for a number of working groups that would be required to explore various options and opportunities. The Steering Committee would be responsible to both Councils and would report progress to both. The Amalgamation Steering committee would also act as the primary interface between the various implementation committees and the respective Councils  
It is expected that the Steering Committee would be made up from the 'Moving Forward' committee members plus two additional representatives from each congregation and the 'Moving Forward' Committee would be disbanded.
- Work begin immediately on developing Mission and Vision statements for the new combined congregation. These statements would reflect the birth of a new church created by its two founding congregations. It is expected that a significant number of members from both congregations would participate in the process and provide input into the development of these new statements and that congregational working meetings would be held to develop understanding and commitment.

- Ministries and Programs Assessment -The Committee recommends that a Ministries and Program Assessment ('MPA') Committee be struck to assess and make recommendations related to maintaining or putting in place Ministries and Programs that compliment the Mission and Vision. For example: The Committee discussed whether the new entity should have a goal of becoming the destination United Church for S.E. Calgary. If so, how can that be achieved and what implications might that have on our building and location?
- Timing - The Committee recommends that amalgamation timing be further explored and developed by the Steering Committee considering the duration of Hillary's maternity leave and the need to seek a replacement as a result of Tom's pending retirement.
- Current Staffing – The Committee recommends that current staffing remain unchanged. See the comments below related to location. The continued operation of the St Andrew's Centre will continue to require staff for the transition period.
- Future Staffing – The Committee suggests that future staffing requirements will be very dependent upon a process of Visioning of what DPUC and SAUC are to become and will be determined as the process progresses.
- Name - The Committee recommends that a new name be chosen for the new entity. The feeling of the Committee is that the name should not incorporate elements of the old congregational names. Rather, the Committee feels that the new name should reflect a rebirth of two strong communities of faith. A naming committee under the direction of the Steering Committee should be struck as soon as possible.
- Refurbishment - The Committee recommends that in the very near term a Refurbishment Committee to be struck to implement, as soon as practical, changes to the furniture and accoutrements of the Deer Park building. The intent of this committee should be to implement easy to accomplish changes to furniture, paint, church service accoutrements such as the baptismal font, banners, alter etc. to make the building feel less "Deer Parkish" and more reflect to mission, vision and character that we wish to create in the new congregation. A building that both Deer Park and St. Andrew's members and adherents can feel part of. The Committee feels the congregations should try to eliminate any feeling that some St. Andrew's members and adherents still have that they are "just visiting" Deer Park.
- Location – given that SAUC has three more years on its lease for the St. Andrew's Center there is no need to make any immediate decisions on location and/or space requirements. There were a few opinions in the surveys that said the congregations should move into a different (possibly new) building. The Committee recommends that for the time being the congregations maintain the Deer Park building as the location for services and that the St. Andrew's Center be maintained to run programming and ministries much the same as it is being used today. However, the Committee

recommends that a 'Location Committee' be struck as soon as possible to assess:

- 1) The viability of modifying the existing Deer Park building to accommodate the increased staffing and, hopefully, increased attendance, that is anticipated in three years time when the St. Andrew's lease expires, and,
- 2) The desire and viability of either building or procuring, another larger building and selling the Deer Park building.
- 3) The desirability and potential of continuing to utilize a "satellite" location(s) (potentially for programming in a community location) post the expiry of the St. Andrew's Centre lease.

Obviously such as assessment and recommendation should be completed as soon as possible because it will be necessary to raise money for renovations to the Deer Park building or for a new/different building and it will take time to renovate or sell the existing building and to build or procure a new/different building.

- Governance – Until such time as amalgamation is achieved SAUC and DPUC will maintain their separate Councils. The Moving Forward Committee recommends however that Joint Council information sessions be convened as soon as practical. How often the Joint Council Information sessions should be held should be decided through consultation with the 2 councils. The Steering Committee will develop recommendations for the governance structure of the new entity.
- Finance - The Moving Forward Committee recommends that a finance committee be struck, with members from both SAUC and DPUC to assess the relative finances, and obligations of both congregations. The mandate of the Joint Finance committee should be to exchange financial information between both congregations and to assess the financial implications of the recommendations put forward by the various committees and develop plans for the consolidation and management of the financial books of account
- Information Technology – The Moving Forward Committee recommends that an Information technology committee assess the viability of melding the information technologies of both congregations as soon as possible with the intent of improving communication and social media effectiveness and finding cost savings if possible.
- Ministry and Personnel – The Moving Forward Committee believes separate M&P committees must be maintained until the time of amalgamation.

## **5. Council Approvals to Proceed**

The following motions were approved by both councils

(St. Andrew's – February 25, 2020 and Deer Park – March 3, 2020)

**a. Motion 1:**

That St. Andrew's United Church in conjunction with Deer Park United Church agree to work towards the amalgamation of our two communities of faith into a single entity.

OR

That Deer Park United Church in conjunction with St. Andrew's United Church agree to work towards the amalgamation of our two communities of faith into a single entity.

**b. Motion 2:**

That a joint Deer Park United Church and St. Andrew's United Church Amalgamation Steering Committee be established as soon as possible and that both St. Andrew's and Deer Park appoint 5 people to the committee.

Both councils expressed concerns over the timing of the final decision on amalgamation especially given Hillary's upcoming maternity leave and the need to commence a search for Tom's replacement before the end of the year and the desire to have their input and participation in the amalgamation

Given the approval by both councils the Amalgamation Steering Committee will:

1. Hold its initial meeting by mid-April ( April 19 or 26?)
2. Set a "PLAN" to move forward.
3. Take the "PLAN" to the congregations by June 14 or June 21 and is endorsed for moving forward.
4. All dates are flexible

**6. Attachments**

- a. Summary of discussion group and survey feedback**
- b. Presentation given to councils in support of the motions.**

Report respectfully submitted by

Jocelyn Gelanis (Deer Park Council Chair)

John Palmer (St. Andrew's Council Chair)

Reverend Hillary Van Spronsen (St. Andrew's Coordinating Team Minister)

Reverend Tom Melvin (Deer Park Minister)

Richard Betts (Member of St. Andrew's United Church)

Jan van Egteren (Member of Deer Park United Church)