

Joint Needs Assessment Committee

Executive Summary

Findings and Recommendations to the Board and Congregation of Westworth United Church

January, 2016

“To be the hands and feet of Christ within Westworth and beyond”

“Living Out God’s Mission in the World”

“The needs assessment policies and procedures aim to support pastoral charges that are considering a change in pastoral relations. The purpose of the needs assessment process is to create a snapshot of the pastoral charge—the faith community and resources—in order to make a recommendation for what future ministry leadership the pastoral charge needs to live out God’s mission in the world. The responsibility to conduct a needs assessment belongs jointly to the pastoral charge and the presbytery.” (united-church.ca/files/handbooks/pastoral-relations)

At the congregational meeting of Feb 8, 2015, the following motion was passed: “That Westworth United Church proceed as soon as possible with calling for a fully comprehensive JNAC that would be a full assessment of the total needs of Westworth congregation and its financial and personnel resource needs.”

The Joint Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) has considered the life and work of the congregation in the following areas: our physical building, human resources, finance, governance, and management. We believe this meets the mandate given to us by the Westworth Board in February, 2015. As we state elsewhere in this report, JNAC’s do not solve problems. Instead they listen, process, consult, and make recommendations, recognizing that not all members of the congregation will be satisfied. As much as possible, JNAC has been open to all possibilities presented to it, realistic about limitations of financial and human resources, and open to God’s guidance.

As we considered our building, it became clear that it is a liability as well as an asset. The amount of time spent by Committees dealing with problems related to the building takes away a huge amount of energy from other things our congregation might be doing to contribute to our larger community. Presently the scope of the building’s needs is a weight on the congregation that is becoming too large to bear in terms of the costs to our financial well-being, energy and our ability to focus on actions that allow us to meet our Mission. The congregation and Board have identified the issues pertaining directly to our building. It is costly to run and much of the space has been deemed inefficient or underused. A conversation with the congregation, as a whole, regarding this weight needs to be initiated as soon as possible and the options including the possibilities of re-development need to be considered.

JNAC Recommendations for the Physical Structure

THAT the congregation and Board of Westworth Church explore engaging EDGE: A Network for Ministry Development. EDGE has a development consultant who has experience in assisting a number of congregations with real estate issues. A second option would be to retain an individual or another organization to assist the congregation with identifying and developing changes to the

physical structure. Changes must be made if the congregation wishes to continue. This party would be able to assist with accessing grants if re-development of the building is required;

THAT the congregation and Board of Westworth Church create an ad hoc committee composed of representatives of the Property Committee, the Finance Committee, the congregation, and possibly in consultation with EDGE or similar person/organization. This committee will formulate a clear, well-researched rental policy that considers cost effectiveness of the rental use of the building, considering the burden on staff, the building, and volunteers. Cost effectiveness will need to be balanced with the Mission and Values statements to provide support to groups within Westworth and beyond.

We are suggesting one full-time ordered Minister to be responsible for Worship and Pastoral Care, with some Christian Education responsibilities. We are also recommending one part-time, non-ordered person with a church background, either through education or experience, be hired through contract. Along with the appropriate committees, this person would focus on the welcome, orientation and engagement of our newer households and young families, and provide faith and pastoral support (to include Church School, youth and Messy Church-type activities). Full staffing recommendations and position descriptions are to follow.

JNAC Recommendations for Human Resources

THAT the congregation and Board of Westworth Church create a contract position responsible for our ministry to children, youth, young adults, young families, and newcomers. The incumbent would plan, support and encourage educational and spiritual opportunities and activities, including Church School and Messy Church-type activities, which keep the place of children, youth and young families in the forefront. The incumbent would facilitate appropriate pastoral support for this group. A focus for this position would be building relationships between this group and God, and this group and our congregation. The Minister would be responsible for supporting and guiding the person in this position and would actively participate in program planning;

THAT the mandate of the Christian Education committee be reviewed in accordance with this new position, to reflect an emphasis on providing support for families, youth, and newcomers;

THAT the Minister work with the Board, committees and lay volunteers to implement the strategies and actions identified in the Visioning Report as ways to help members of Westworth celebrate their Christian faith, provide compassionate pastoral care and build community;

THAT the congregation and Board of Westworth Church emphasize the role of the Ministry and Personnel Committee (M&P) as the "Human Resources" (HR) body of the church, responsible for the supervision and performance review of all paid staff members. The M&P team should be small (3 people), and meet as a group to make decisions concerning staff. This important work in HR needs to be supported by ensuring that volunteers on M&P have the appropriate training to take on the position of supervisor and, if necessary, a disciplinary role; that policies and current practices are reviewed; that congregants with Human Resource skills act as consultants to the committee if they are unable to be active members. An annual meeting of all staff with M&P will be held to clarify expectations in light of the setting of new goals by the Board. The question of how staff is supervised day to day is still under review;

THAT the congregation and Board of Westworth Church ensure and budget for the provision of appropriate training for volunteers in outreach, pastoral care, church school, adult education, M&P and other leadership roles. The Nominating Committee or individual committees, as required would take a leadership role;

Relevant job descriptions must be adjusted to reflect new or changed responsibilities. There will be some financial implications.

In the areas of Governance and Human Resources, we found that many people who have the skills, knowledge and experience Westworth needs choose not to become involved because of the governance structure that we currently use, because of the amount of time that is asked, and because of a lack of clarity about what exactly is expected of individuals. It is difficult for volunteers to find these activities as faith-building when the goals for many things are not clear. There is a need to restructure our Board and Committees. There is also a lack of clarity for our general membership about the need for each person in the congregation to find a way to share their gifts and talents in ways that will benefit their faith journey as well that of the Congregation's.

JNAC Recommendations for Governance

THAT the congregation and Board of Westworth Church employ an external agency such as EDGE: A Network for Ministry Development, or an individual agent to review and evaluate the current governance model and recommend appropriate changes. A "Request For Proposals" (RFP) may be needed for this. This change agency (agent) would work with the newly formed Governance Committee and the Board to implement the changes;

THAT the Nominating Committee be responsible for assessing training needs for the Board members, related to individual members' understandings of how a Committee should be run and Board responsibilities. The goal is to increase consistency and build capacity in the Board and committee chairs. The Nominating Committee will develop and provide the training required, including a mandatory orientation for Committee Chairs to clarify Chair responsibilities;

THAT the Board reviews committee chair descriptions so that past Committee chairs are available to meet with and/or advise the committee following the end of their term as Chair to assist with succession planning and mentoring when required.

JNAC Recommendations for Management

THAT the Executive of the Board of Westworth Church work with the minister, staff and committees to facilitate and be accountable for the smooth functioning of day-to-day church activities;

That the Board of Westworth Church:

1. **Facilitate appropriate training opportunities for staff, committee chairs, committees, volunteers and church school leaders as required or requested;**
2. **Evaluate current software and recommend purchase of appropriate software based on the needs identified by the Finance Committee, Property and Rentals Committee, and Treasurer in order to make workload more manageable and increase efficiencies;**
3. **Facilitate increased use of the website as a communications tool to publicize the activities and accomplishments of the church, especially Outreach activities, to the community outside Westworth;**

That the Governance Committee considers clarifying lines of accountability which ensure the smooth functioning of day-to-day activities. Relevant job descriptions must be adjusted to reflect new or changed job responsibilities.

Regarding our Finances, we have been told that many households are giving close to or at their maximum ability to give. Many have continued to be generous, in their efforts to meet the Congregation's request for increases over the past few years. Our building continues to demand a large commitment of financial resources, and we would like to offer the desired levels of programming, worship, and pastoral care. Choices need to be made. (See the attached financial information sheet.)

We have identified the need to either revisit the mandate of the Faith and Future Fund or return to offering a version of our previous Legacy Fund, as an option for those considering giving a monetary gift to the congregation, whether through their Estate planning or in gratitude at the time of a significant milestone. Several congregants have stated their wish for an option that would allow their money to be used within Westworth and not distributed elsewhere.

JNAC Recommendations for Finance

THAT the congregation and Board of Westworth Church ensure that computer technology is evaluated and updated where necessary. Better software, used consistently by all people who are involved with financial matters of the congregation, would help the paid and volunteer staff track finances, and would allow for better budget planning, and more efficient use of time ;

THAT the congregation and Board of Westworth Church revisit the mandate of the Faith and Future Fund OR re-establish the Legacy Fund or a variation of it, to provide more flexible options for congregants currently considering Westworth in their estate planning, or wishing to make a gift to the congregation in gratitude at the time of a celebration or milestone in a life. There needs to be a resolution to the debate about the use of the Faith and Future fund for the long term financial health of the congregation, or an option provided.

You will find other observations and suggestions through the main document but the Joint Needs Assessment Committee feels very strongly about the recommendation that follows now:

Lastly, the JNAC's recommendation is for the congregation and Board of Westworth Church to employ an external agency such as EDGE: A Network for Ministry Development (a United Church organization), or an individual agent, to review and evaluate the current governance, structural, and long term challenges facing Westworth and to recommend appropriate changes. JNAC has neither the expertise nor the mandate to make such recommendations; our job is to identify what needs to

change. We feel strongly that 'fresh eyes' with a degree of distance from the congregation need to undertake this review in order to present us with new approaches related to how we experience church, to navigate the significant changes that may result over a longer term, and to minimize the potential for conflict and division within the congregation. During our interviews with congregants and committees, we repeatedly heard that Westworth won't survive long if it continues in its present vein. Now is the time to take action and we believe EDGE or a qualified 'outside' person is best suited to the task at hand.