

**Westworth United Church
Congregational Meeting
Sunday, December 3, 2017**

Minutes

Present: Norm Snyder, Jennifer Snyder, Alma Acheson, Dorcas Windsor, Kirk Windsor, Eleanor Geib, Dorothy Reid, Garry Reid, Diether Peschken, Marion Muldrew, Fraser Muldrew, Douglas MacEwan, Betty Skinner, Carol Hunter, Alessie Srichandra, Nancy Williamson, Andrea Firth, Jean Doern, Shirley Watts, Bob Johnston, Sam Andrew, Judy Brown, Kevin Sim, Ana White, Noella White, Ed White, Kim O'Grady, Peter Sim, Dan Wiwchar, Ruth Wiwchar, Gerald Davis, Cheryl McNabb Davis, Maggie Barnett, Allan Baker, Rochelle Baker, Barb Magarrell, Ron Bailey, Wendy Moroz, Fred Chernoff, Natalie Chernoff, Lorna Willems, Garry Willems, Laurelle Murdoch, Florence Baker, Morag Bergthorson, Merle McTaggart, Petra Thanisch, Lee-Ann Blasé, Ruth Epler, Joyce Gould, Diane Riordan, Bettina Nyman, George Numan, Anne Love, Keith Love, Heather Robbins, Gordon Toombs, Kathy Wilson, Alan Wilson, Bruce Tefft, Dianne Sjoberg, Allan McKay, Marion McKay, Carol Wilkie, Jim Pigden, Elaine Pigden, Earl Gould, Nancy Doern-White, Eunice Pratt, Catherine Barnsley, MaryLynne Barnsley, Larry Strachan, Clark Wilkie

1. **Opening Grace:** by Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd
2. **Call to order:** at 12:27 pm
3. **Introduction:** by Norm Snyder stating that this is an informational session of the discussions that have been going on in the Council meetings. He stated that the Westworth congregation is a family that undergoes change. He also said that family is separate from the building which is a tool that we use to go forward with our Vision. He stated that there are challenges and opportunities that we need to deal with.
4. **Financial status:** Cheryl McNabb Davis reported on the financial status of the church. She stated that we are presently financially stable but that there are going to be challenges going forward. We have less people giving more. Costs are going up and income going down. It is time to rethink the future. She also gave statistics that there are about 30 United churches in Winnipeg but only enough active contributing members to sustain 10 congregations.
5. **EDGE options:** Larry Strachan introduced the other committee members. He presented a summary of the EDGE consultations that took place last year. He started with the assets that our church has and then presented issues that the church is facing.

Blessings:

- We are blessed with our mission and vision statements and implementation strategy

- WUC property has considerable development potential.

Challenges:

- We have declining attendance, volunteers and financial support.
- Ageing congregation
- Building has low operating costs, but large capital building costs have been deferred

He talked about the funds on hand as the costs of church operation, building operation, maintenance and staffing. He addressed the capital expenses that the church faces in the future. A minimum of \$265,000 required in near future for building capital expenses; this cost represents about 69% of our total assets as of December 31, 2016.

Conclusions of the EDGE committee:

- Development of our vision and implementation strategy is a significant step forward,
- Declining resources threaten Westworth's viability
- Ageing of our congregation is becoming critical

Recommendations of the EDGE committee:

- Implement our vision strategy using a neighbourhood ministry renewal approach
- Continue assessment of property redevelopment

Building options: These are high level concepts and need a lot more analysis to confirm viability, revenue potential, and cost to implement.

- Stay the course and:
 - seek out others to amalgamate with us
 - renovate the gym to attract full time renters.
- Demolish the gym and:
 - redevelop the property
 - reconfigure the narthex/sanctuary for our worship/programs
- Demolish the property and redevelop it and:
 - seek a new facility for our worship/programs
- Demolish and redevelop the complete property and:
 - seek amalgamation with others.
- Cease operations and sell the property

6. **Next steps:** Norm Snyder stated that we have been presented with a variety of options. We have time to think about what we need to do next. Council has been

examining these and has also been examining other options such as partnering with another congregation. We have to do things differently as we go forward, whether it be with changes to the building, changes to the way Westworth does things, sharing with others and the community, expanding rentals, or partnering with other congregations, amalgamation.

- Marion MacKay raised the issue that more information is needed regarding costs of any changes.

Norm Snyder cited the article in the Observer that talked about amalgamations and the findings of the success of amalgamations based on the reasons for those amalgamating. Amalgamation is not just joining with a nearby church, but involves looking at matching vision, assets, programs, strengths and what each group brings to the table.

7. Expanding and innovative programs:

Youth Programs:

Maggie Barnett presented on the work she has been doing with youth programs both within Westworth and encouraging community programs. At present our Sunday School has a steady attendance of around 20 children. She has been expanding contacts outside of Westworth. Her message is that Westworth is here and has a lot to offer. Besides contacting other churches, she has been making contacts with other groups and starting community programs such as the Westworth Community evening events that happen every other Friday. Some of the events have been a Messy Church, a play performance, board games night and our Advent event. Our new Youth group will be at Westworth on a Saturday from 3.30-4.30pm practicing Qigong while learning about other faiths. Upcoming programs include a Parent/ Caregiver drop-in for conversation and coffee, with 'movement to music' for tiny tots starting in January. She is also connecting with The Home School Network and The Autism Society to see if they can utilize our facilities for their programs.

She also stated that we need to support those programs presently in existence and that are planned. She encouraged everyone to spread the word and be supportive. Communication is key.

Outreach:

Ruth Wiwchar spoke about the work of the Outreach committee and all the different programs that the Westworth congregation supports. They are involved not only with the West Broadway, but also a variety of events such as the reunion of survivors of the residential schools, social justice plans, and many other projects to have us truly be the hands and feet of Christ.

8. Other congregations and explorations:

Keith Love presented on some of the discussions that have taken place with Harrow and Crescent Fort Rouge United Churches regarding what challenges they are facing. Some of these congregations have been sharing worship services, choir programs, even staffing. Feelers were put out to 2 other churches to see what their feelings would be regarding having discussions about future options for joining together. Westworth and these other churches all look to opportunities in the community, and shared vision and values. Recently it has also been noted that Headingly United and St Charles United have recently voted for amalgamation most recently, and Sturgeon Creek United, Silver Heights United, and Kirkfield Park United churches have voted for amalgamation just prior to that. These actions have taken a long time (years). It is not a process that occurs quickly. Norm Snyder and Eunice Pratt will be talking further with 2 representatives from Harrow on behalf of Westworth.

Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd started her message noting that we are in a position of strength and that we should be positive and hopeful as to what action we take. She discussed the programs that she and other Westworth members have been involved with that bring in people from other churches and other faiths. Many events bring others into contact with Westworth and have also placed Westworth on the radar with the greater United Church regionally and nationally. The programs that have gained attention are:

- interfaith Lenten studies
- ecumenical Taizé services
- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity—held week day service, will be hosting the City-Wide Ecumenical service Jan. 21, 2018
- part of leadership for the Winnipeg Diversity Rally Against Hate
- St. Andrew's River-Heights joint Good Friday services
- Educational Workshops for community service providers
- upcoming day-long workshop April 17, 2018 on De-Escalating Conflict, led by Karen Ridd
- hosted feast for Assiniboia Residential School Survivors, worked with St. Andrew's-River Heights & Roman Catholic churches
- hosted Australian Indigenous delegation from the Uniting Church in Australia for worship & workshop in July
- Bazaar & Rummage Sales
- UCW units, men & women's spirituality groups
- little library
- West Broadway
- Refuge Winnipeg

We are passionate about: education, advocacy, hospitality, community service, worship and networking

Fraser Muldrew spoke about some of the ways our Westworth facility might be used by other community groups.

9. Feedback:

- Jean Doern would like the EDGE report and other information presented today made available.
- Leann Blasé stated that as a congregant from another church that did close, it is a very painful experience and that change is better than die.
- Peter Sim spoke about the EDGE report in terms of how much of what we are doing depends on the building. He said we have two alternatives – maintain the building or leaving it behind.
- Shirley Watts spoke to the fact that the more things we do within our building involving the community makes us eligible for grants that may be helpful.

10. What do we do in the future? Norm Snyder summarized saying that the Council needs input from the congregation as to how to proceed, what we should be exploring, ideas on how we can move forward. He urged people to contact him or other members of council with their ideas and that there will be informational sessions.

11. Closing Prayer: Loraine Mackenzie Shepherd offered a closing prayer.

Norm Snyder, Chair of the Board

Alma Acheson, Secretary

