

Digest of Actions
St. Andrew's United Church Congregational Meeting
Held by *Zoom*, North Bay, ON
Tuesday June 30th, 2020

1. Everyone was welcomed by Rev. Rob Smith and Rev. Melody Duncanson-Hales from the Regional Shield Regional Council (CSRC). They were the facilitators for this online meeting.
2. Susan Whitehead, CSRC Administrator offered tips for using the *Zoom* controls.
3. Rob Smith read our Council Touchstones and spoke briefly about holy manners and about allowing the gift of the spirit to guide us.
4. Tracy Davis read a traditional territory acknowledgement written by Treanor Greer-Delarosbel and our 2013 Affirming Statement.
5. Tracy Davis offered a brief worship based on a paraphrase of Matthew 10: 1-10.
6. Rob Smith and Melody Duncanson-Hales spoke about the purpose of the meeting, which was to provide information about the belfry issue and encourage congregation members to spend the next few weeks discerning what the future of the congregation may look like.
7. A motion was passed to accept with regret and thanks the resignation of two of our trustees: Julia Morton and Bill Ingwersen.
8. Peter Haddow outlined the present status of our property. The belfry is in need of repair and the City of North Bay has issued a January 2021 deadline for obtaining a building permit to fix it. Architects Critchley Hill have given an initial cost estimate of \$750,000 to do the repairs. A more firm costing will be available if we make the decision go to tender. Related documentation is available by following the links on our website: <http://standrews-northbay.ca/>
9. Derek Stott spoke briefly about our finances. He pointed to the Financial Viability Report (Dec. 2019) from the Visioning Committee and the most recent financial statement (May 2020). Both of these are available on our website (see above).
10. Rob Smith and Melody Duncanson-Hales spoke about discerning the way forward. Practically, everything boils down to two main options:
 - > Repair the building
 - > Sell the building and re-establish the congregation in a new form.
11. Congregational members were placed in virtual groups of 4 people and were asked to provide feedback on two items:
 - > What are your questions?
 - > What are your initial reactions?
12. Rob Smith closed the meeting by encouraging members to pray and to sit with their feelings and questions for the next few weeks. The most important question: What does it mean to be St. Andrew's?

The next two pages have a list of questions and comments that came out of the meeting. During the next month, the Council will endeavour to find answers to some of these questions. Some questions may not be easily answered right now but will be important as the congregation decides what our future will be. If you have further questions or comments about the belfry issue please forward them to Karen Gooch.

There will be another important congregational meeting on Thursday July 30th, 2020 to continue this conversation.

Due to the pandemic, this will be another online meeting. If you have concerns about joining an online meeting, there is help available. For more information, please contact the church office at 705-472-7680 or Karen Gooch, Council Secretary at councilsecretary_standrews@cogeco.net or 705-472-0605.

These are the questions and comments that came from the small group discussions:

From the *Zoom* chat:

- How many quotes do we have?
- What would an unsafe order produce if we let deadlines pass
- What would the final design look like?
- Have we investigated whether it is possible to close the adjacent streets to bring the structure down?
- Is there any avenue for funding from the Province, City or group?
- If the city can close the streets for filming, why not for us.
- Any chance this is the last expense we'll see in a while or should we be preparing ourselves for more building maintenance needs in the near future?
- A breakdown of the engineering costs?
- What is involved in selling the building? How much time? Does St. A's have access to the money given that the UCC owns the building?
- What is the futuring scheme for North Bay overall (united church in North Bay)?
- What is our building worth?
- Our group debated how much we may have to pay to keep the aging building going when the true spirit of St. Andrew's is its people and our mission. The essence of St. Andrew's can be moved as opposed to going deeper in debt to keep the building viable.
- What about moving St. Andrew's as a community and renting space elsewhere?
- The questions we had focused on the estimated cost, the need perhaps to look for another architect to look for other quotes.
- We learned that we are more than a building. We want to stay as a faith community until we discern our future if it means another place.
- We are hopeful that something wonderful will come out of this difficult and challenging time.
- We talked too about moving to a storefront and seeing our work in action, but we also recognized that there are pieces of heritage there...beauty, that we would hate to lose or leave behind.
- What happens if we can't afford to fix and we can't find someone to purchase within the timeline given by the city?
- We have to decide whether or not to cut our losses and find a new place to worship or dump more money into a building. If we decide to not dump more money where to go in short term and in the long whether to join with other churches or go it alone.
- How do you sell a building with a projected repair of 750,000?
- Would a "clean site" make a difference to the sale of the building?
- Are there other funding options such as Heritage funding that we can explore, or other community based organizations such as Rotary who would support this project?
- If we want to move are we still saddled with the cost of fixing the bell tower so that it isn't a hazard to citizens?
- Would we be putting so much energy into fundraising that we would lose a lot of our outreach and stewardship volunteers because we are trying so hard to raise this amount of money?
- Where do we get the leadership from the congregation to get all these questions asked and answered
- If we leave the building, do we lose our Affirming status?
- Can we sell the building without doing the repairs?
- A congregation is more than its building.

From Group #6:

- This crisis has revealed a conversation about the future of the congregation that has been going on for a long time at St Andrew's ... for decades. It's been travelling along under the surface, and now it is really out in the open.
- I need to hear more information.
- I am listening hard to what people are saying and praying for good and respectful engagement between us all.
- I used to have a real emotional attachment to the St Andrew's space but it's mostly because of the people I have known there. It's been generational. But I have those memories in my heart. I am prepared to re-purpose a part of the building or to move.
- \$750,000.00 is a lot of money, an unimaginable amount to be raised through fundraising to be put into a building. Can you imagine what we could do with that amount of money if it were applied to the Loaves and Fishes program, or to staffing?
- I am concerned about the downtown folk, and how we can continue to serve there.
- I am seeing "the end of life" for the building. Almost always, it is a crisis that causes change. This will mean a big change but we need to change.
- People in the congregation, I think, are feeling overwhelmed by "the belfry problem," and disconnected because of Covid-19.
- The \$750,000.00 will divide us as a congregation—those choosing the building vs those choosing mission. That is not good.
- We need to focus on the mission of the church, on the people in the congregation and the community at large.
- We need at least a two-prong approach going forward: 1) supporting the present ministry of the congregation (ensuring the congregation stays together, maintaining worship, making sure pastoral care is happening etc.) AND 2) forward-planning tasked with establishing and putting wheels under a long-term plan.
- Where is the leadership going to come from to fundraise for the belfry project?
- If we are not able to raise the money to repair the belfry, or sell the building, where does that leave us?
- Could a portion of the building be redeveloped for housing?