

St. Andrew's Council Meeting
 Held by *Zoom*, North Bay, ON
 Tuesday June 30th, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

Welcome and Opening (6:35 p.m.)	Rob Smith and Melody Duncanson-Hales welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Susan Whitehead, Administrator from the Canadian Shield Regional Council (CSRC), for her technical help. Susan and Melody offered tips on using <i>Zoom</i> .
Attendance	There were 62 members and adherents from St. Andrew's attending the first Congregational <i>Zoom</i> meeting.
Guests	Rev. Rob Smith, Rev. Melody Duncanson-Hales, with technical support from Susan Whitehead.
Agenda	The agenda was circulated electronically through our website ahead of this meeting.
Touchstones/ Holy Manners	<p>Rob Smith read our Council Touchstones aloud:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give and receive welcome 2. Be present as fully as possible 3. No fixing, saving, advising or correcting 4. Observe deep confidentiality 5. Trust and learn from silence 6. When the going gets tough, turn to wonder <p>Rob then spoke about the principal of <i>Holy Manners</i>. We were reminded to keep God at the center of our interactions, to separate people from problems and to honour the group decisions we make. Listening is important so we can really hear the story and recognize the gift of the holy spirit.</p>
Traditional Territory/ Affirming Statement	<p>Tracy Davis read an acknowledgement of Traditional Territory written by Treanor Greer-Delarosbel:</p> <p>We live on the Traditional Land of the Nipissing First Nation, the custodians of this land, lost to them via the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850. The Nishnaabeg People have lived for seven generations and more between two watersheds: at a crossroad. We now find ourselves living at that same crossroad, both from a physical and metaphorical sense. The memories of the Ancient Ones; the knowledge of the Elders and the Seven Generations yet to come, guides us to understand their cultural heritage, their beliefs, and their relationship with the land. We acknowledge that the recognition of Indigenous Territorial Land is a small step along the long road of Truth and Reconciliation. We will continue this journey with our Indigenous neighbours as we weave our paths together as one along a new path.</p> <p>She then read the St. Andrew's Affirming statement from May 5th, 2013:</p> <p>We, the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church, declare publicly our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive and nurturing community where all people are welcome not only to enter these doors, but also to take part in every aspect of our church life including membership, leadership, celebrating life's passages and marriage. We delight in God's goodness as expressed through variations in age, gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, family configuration, differing abilities, ethnic background or economic circumstance - even as such rich diversity may challenge us. We pray for God's spirit to guide us as we work for reconciliation and justice for all persons.</p>

Worship

Tracy Davis offered a brief worship based on a Eugene Peterson paraphrase of Matthew 10:1-10. She invited us to take a moment to pause and listen. She also asked us to let go of the day and whatever is holding us captive. What is preventing us from moving forward? As we continue our faith journey remember to travel light and look to those outside ourselves for help.

New Business

Meeting Purpose Rob Smith spoke about the purpose of this meeting:

- This meeting is an opportunity to provide the congregation with information regarding the belfry issue. The meeting is not intended as a time to make decisions but it is a time to get people thinking about the future.
- This is the beginning of a discernment process. People will be invited to reflect and prepare for a fuller discussion at a second meeting later in the summer.
- People will be given a brief chance for discussion during virtual small groups later in the meeting. Feedback from these discussions can be given to the whole group through the *Zoom* chat feature.
- Rob lit a candle to remind us we are trying to find what God is asking of us.

Trustee Resignations Letters of resignation were received by the Council at our last meeting from Julia Morton and Bill Ingwersen, two of St. Andrew's trustees. The following motion was passed by the congregation:

Motion 098/20

Elizabeth Brownlee/ Kim Delarosbel moved that St. Andrew's congregation accept the resignations of Trustees Julia Morton and Bill Ingwersen with regret and thanks for their years of service to our Community of Faith.

Carried

Property Status Peter Haddow provided an overview of the issue regarding the belfry:

- The belfry tower is crumbling and Architects Critchley Hill have given an initial cost estimate of approximately \$750,000 to do the repairs. This will involve removing the tower and capping it with a flat roof above the level of the balcony staircase. The City of North Bay has given a deadline of January 2021 to obtain a building permit with the completion date for the work of September 2021.
- Several people expressed concerns about the high cost. We will not have a firm cost unless we decide to go to tender. Another architect and engineer were consulted. They did not provide cost estimates, but agreed removing the tower is the best course of action.
- We have paid out less than \$5,000 to date for inspections and consultation. An additional \$10,000 was paid for scaffolding used during the inspections however it was also needed to repair a mold issue. The architects are currently preparing drawings.
- We have not investigated sources of funding yet, however it is very unlikely we will receive funding from the United Church since all grant programs are on hold so money will be available to help congregations in need because of the Covid-19 crisis.
- Use of the building will be restricted after the reopening and the balcony will be off limits. We are in the process of installing safety fencing around the Algonquin Street side of the building as required by the city.

- Documentation related to the belfry issue can be found on our website.
<https://standrews-northbay.ca/belfry-tower/>

Finances Derek Stott spoke briefly about the financial situation of St. Andrew's:

- There was a Financial Viability Report prepared by the Visioning Committee with data up to December 2019 which indicates that we have not met our operating expenses for 5 of the last 8 years.
<https://standrews-northbay.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Financial-Viability-Review-end-2019.pdf>
- It is still uncertain how the Covid-19 crisis will affect the finances for this year. The May 31st, 2020 financial statement indicates our expenses are \$17,143.76 more than our revenue. At this time we also have \$290,200.27 in Planned Gift Funds and \$126,909 in the manse Fund that we could potentially access.
<https://standrews-northbay.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/OperatingStatement-May-2020.pdf>
- Derek reminded people that ongoing financial support is still needed and encouraged people to consider regular donations through PAR.

Discernment Rob Smith and Melody Duncanson-Hales talked about important things to think about as we consider how we will move forward.

- In reality there are two choices to consider: staying with the building or leaving the building and reestablishing the congregation in a new form.
- What are your gut reactions to these two ideas?
- What would either option mean? What could we dream about?
- There is no need to rush – take time to digest all the information that is put forth – but there is a timeline to consider.
- Is this the last major repair for the building? There will always be some issues with old buildings and it is known that the buttresses will need attention at some point.

Small Group **Appendix I**

Discussion The people at the meeting were placed randomly into virtual groups of four and given 15 minutes to discuss how they are feeling by answering two questions:

- What are your questions?
- What are your initial reactions?

People were invited to use the *Zoom* chat to record their comments and questions or pass them on in written form to Council Secretary Karen Gooch after the meeting. A list of questions and comments from the discussions can be found in Appendix I.

Next Steps Rob Smith offered some advice about what's next:

- He invited people to take their questions and feelings and sit with them.
- We will plan another online meeting about a month away.
- Think about what it means to be St. Andrew's.
- What do we as a congregation have the energy to do?
- Pray for guidance as we discern God's plans for us.

Other Business

None

Adjournment

Tracy Davis offered a closing blessing. Peter Haddow moved that the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Congregational Meeting

Tuesday June 30th, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

Zoom

Next Council Meeting

The council will continue to meet over the summer.

TBA

Next Executive Meeting

TBA

Chairperson, Pat Kirton-Bailey

Secretary, Karen Gooch

Appendix I

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?