

St. Aidan's United Church
Exploring Amalgamation
Cadboro Bay United Church

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"Finding our Way Through Worship"

by Cheryl Black

The overall theme of worship for the 2019-20 year is Finding Our Way. This is a quest that belongs to all human beings. We want to find our way through the obstacles and opportunities present in our lives. As we go through life, we see that all along there have been choice points, times when we had to choose between two or more options and find our way down the chosen path.

I loved being a minister in Saskatchewan and could imagine spending my entire ministry in that robust province. Then my Dad died and I felt a pull to return to Ontario and 'tend' my mother even though being 'me' in Ontario would not be easy. Then Shelagh accepted a Call to Vancouver and I had an important choice to make. There have been so many points of decision that have happened – some deliberately made and some made spontaneously that have allowed me to find my way to Victoria. There is a personal journey of finding our way.

I watched a film vignette entitled Finding Our Way which talks about the relationships of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada - or settlers. It is a difficult film to watch. In its description it says:

"This is 21st century Canada, and the story of two communities-colonizers and the colonized. It's a story with a question mark. After almost a century of apartheid in this region, the film asks: Is there a way forward?"

Finding our Way is also a process we are doing as we hold merger talks with Cadboro Bay United Church. We are two neighboring congregations both feeling the cultural shifts against organized religion. "Can we find our way together" is our question.

So, in our explorations of this theme we will be joined in September by the scriptural stories of Adam and Eve. What can these creation story characters teach us about 'finding our way' in our time and context.

Robert Frost wrote in one of his poems:

The Road Not Taken

by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

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~ Carol Munro ~

According to the Oxford Dictionary, Kairos "is an Ancient Greek word meaning the right, critical, or opportune moment. The ancient Greeks had two words for time: chronos and kairos. The former refers to chronological or sequential time, while the latter signifies a proper or opportune time for action."

I suggest to you that this is a Kairos time for St. Aidan's. On November 24 you will make a decision that will shape the congregation's future for the next generation. To find this future way will require everyone to practice discernment, to read the signs of the times, and to pray without ceasing. What is God calling us to? What is the next step in St. Aidan's journey?

This newsletter is the first one of a series that will come out to support you in finding your future path. I'm indebted to Janet Palin for her help in creating this. In it you will find a reflection from Carol Munro and from Mary Lou Whidden as they reflect on their participation in the summer ProCon discussions.

I know that St. Aidan's is a resourceful congregation with a legacy of faithful ministry. Please bring your faith, your discernment and your hope to this discussion. Together you can support one another as you face the future. Please make a commitment to yourself and your church that you will contribute your wisdom and perspectives to the process. We need all of us together to find our way.

Respectfully,

Cheryl



POSSIBILITIES ABOUND! "CHANGE IS INEVITABLE" – DO WE WANT TO BE READY OR JUST LET IT HAPPEN?"

Words of wisdom which resonated with me, spoken at one of our Pros and Cons Meetings.

I have the feeling that the decision is not "IF" but "WHEN".

We talked about the differences between a Community Centre (on which a lot of our current activities focus) – i.e. busy, open and affirming, welcoming, friendly – and a Church, which offers all these things, plus Outreach, relationships, caring/purpose driven, theology/ spirituality. We, as the Church, have a story to tell!

The necessity for visibility and accessibility (e.g. on bus route), but also that Church isn't a building, but the sum of all the wonderful things that happen within and without.

We would probably have to do some things differently, but is that a bad thing?

Our energy levels are diminishing: our age level is increasing!

We're being moved by the Spirit to be and do more – of what?

PRACTICALITIES

Larger congregation = more energy and increased givings

Opportunities for different kinds of worship at varying times

Opportunity for values-based, for profit, business to make up for the gradual diminution of givings.



CBUC congregation will be joining us for a BBQ lunch & conversation following our respective services on **Sunday, September 29th**! Stay tuned for further details!

Exploring Amalgamation

Testimonials from ProCon Sessions & Voting Options



~ Mary Lou Whidden ~

Why do I come out to the Pros and Cons sessions? I think it's because I need and want to be part of a church that is there for future generations. I want my grandkids and their grandkids to hear the gospel message of Jesus - that we are all beloved children of a faithful creator, who is there for us in life's most joyous and most sorrowful moments.

I come to the Pros and Cons sessions to learn from and to listen to others in my faith community. I feel their passion and I connect with their concerns. Just through listening to shared ideas and pondering the various paths that St. Aidan's may choose to follow, I feel that I am in a much better position to make an informed decision, come November, when our congregation will vote on a possible merger with Cadboro Bay United Church.

I don't think any of us can predict what the church of the future may look like; however, I believe that God is calling us to connect with others and to reach out beyond ourselves in new and innovative ways. We will need to be deliberate in choosing our path and be willing to work hard to make our vision a reality.

I am confident that the God who goes before us and resides within us will guide us as we seek to live out God's amazing love for generations to come.

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### Road 1 – Status Quo

St Aidan's goes it alone just as we are.

### Road 2 – Merger

Merger with CBUC which would involve:

Small group ministry

Sharing a building and decision about which of three buildings would be used

### Road 3 – Revitalized St Aidan's

St Aidan's undergo extensive changes.



**Joint councils of St Aidan's & CBUC have agreed to hold an amalgamation vote at separate and concurrent congregational meetings on Sunday, Nov. 24, 2019.**

# Exploring Amalgamation

## Message from Mark Green - CBUC

### Further Down the Road – Merger conversations

By Mark Green

In June, Staff from both congregations gathered to evaluate our past year's theme of "Lifting anchor and setting sail". We talked about what seemed to come next in our journey together. What naturally seemed to emerge from the spirit were the words "FINDING OUR WAY. It seemed apt for what the task ahead of us seems to be in the coming year and also relevant to the many challenges people are facing in their lives in general.

We talked about the many ways people are feeling overwhelmed in life by technology and the pace of change and are looking to find ways through the change. We increasingly hear stories of people feeling isolated and lonely and looking to find new ways to connect. We hear of polarizations in families, communities and nations and we know we need to find new ways to be in relationship with others whose ideas and opinions differ from ours. In a world that is teetering on the edge of environmental collapse we know we need to heed the call to find new ways to live sustainable in this planet. FINDING OUR WAY seemed to be the right theme for us as a world and as two communities of faith looking a way of moving forward together.

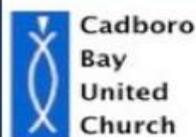
And so over the next year we will be "Finding our Way" forward in number of ways: from discerning a vision and purpose to amalgamating, to what space and facilities we will be needing, to what programs and

worship options will we be offering, to what governance and staffing models will we need, to what small group ministries need to emerge and the list goes on. There will be no shortage of things for us to find our way forward about. We will meet in mixed groups together to discern, challenge and listen to one another to find the common values, dreams and goals that will help us move forward.

We do not know the outcome or the destination. We can only trust at this moment in the good will and shared value in finding our way together. Like all journeys in this life, rarely can we know what the final end point of the journey will be and it will require much patience, resilience and flexibility on all our parts to find the way forward. But I know we have the capacity to not only set out on this voyage but also to name the places where we want to stop and dream and create and imagine along the way. And while it can on the surface feel daunting, I am hoping actually that it will be a lot of fun.

Mostly I'm glad all of us will be on the journey together as we work at FINDING OUR WAY.

~ Mark Green ~



*Exploring Amalgamation*

