

Notes from Amalgamation Question and Answer Session

November 4, 2019 7 – 8:30 pm St. Aidan's

Forty-two people attended the session in the seminar room/chapel with meeting chaired by Council Chair, Doug Koch, aided by Rev. Cheryl Black.

Copies of the "site selection" document and the Amalgamation Proposal were distributed at the beginning of the meeting. It was noted that Amalgamation information was available on board in the Great Hall again now that the Bazaar is over.

Initial positive comments

-good information included in Amalgamation Proposal – great job; with amalgamation we may be more able to fill seats in the sanctuary for worship services; some CBUC people came to help with the Bazaar and their enthusiasm and energy was appreciated; guiding principles were well done

Site selection and deconstruction and renovation -

-What will be done at St. Aidan's while everyone is at CBUC temporarily? What renovations will be done?

Will need to have CBUC and St. Aidan's work together to envision what we would like to include in the church and what is feasible with space and finances

-we know that CBUC would like to have a labyrinth as part of the new church and there will be other things they will like to see brought over to the new church

-there are some issues that we would like to address in the building e.g., widen stairwell between the two floors (error made when they were built and were supposed to be twice as wide), have less of a "rabbit warren" in the lower floor

-what kinds of worship and other activities will we anticipate having and how might the space accommodate these

-will need to critically look at what we want and prioritize what we can afford to do

-scope of changes to building and some idea of how long they will take have not yet been determined; can move ahead on this type of envisioning and planning if amalgamation vote passes. From January to September 2020 we can have lots of these conversations once we decide to go ahead.

-Gordon Head United Church belongs to CBUC – have 2-4 years to decide what to do with it under terms from presbytery and now with the region (national church has ultimate ownership of all sites); GHUC currently rented out

Melding into a new congregation

-Comments made about having two services based on our two current styles at CBUC and St. Aidan's and perhaps adding more styles in future

-concern about perpetuating divisions and melding of two congregations into one not happening if not meeting together; need to look at a way not to be 2 separate congregations when at CBUC during transition

-noted that worship service is only one way to be together and things like small group ministry will mix people from CBUC and St. Aidan's ; also if we have two services, a coffee break between the two would offer an opportunity to meet together

Timelines on pages 9 and 10 of Amalgamation Proposal

- Draft timeline includes moving during the summer of 2020 and worshipping together by September 2020
 - o Will be have a Fall Bazaar in 2020? Anticipate that there will be a Fall Bazaar at St. Aidan's in 2020 and the Thrift Shop may or may not be part of that as the Thrift Shop is moving toward being a social enterprise with a 5 member board to guide change for its reorganization and expansion. It is not anticipated that the Thrift Store will move to CBUC and may stay at the current site or move somewhere nearby in the community
 - Don't expect Thrift Store to close through the amalgamation process; it may be at another nearby location
 - o Some attendees thought that the move to the CBUC site should occur after the envisioning of what we want together and plans are in place and should coincide with the contracted start date of construction for the renovation
 - Noted that the transition is not just a construction time but time for empathy training – need a period for St. A people to understand what it is like to be in someone else's home and empty our house to make room for others and let go of ownership as it was and make reconfigured space a joint home – take a couple of years to break current patterns
 - Noted that we need to look at how to keep St. A's community together through the transition period so empathy going both ways
 - Need to make more of an effort to get to know others, not just connect with those we know
 - Comment made that we can learn from the experience of First Met; also Pragmatic Possibilities group looking at best practices for amalgamations
 - Need clear picture for renovated plan of where you are going before starting with architectural plans – spiritual growth challenge with change
 - Many people will offer their ideas and won't all agree but need to look at what will be our priorities together

-?voting on timelines – Expect that there will be information session when decisions need to be made and input received at them will be incorporated back into decisions; it is expected that congregation members will have input into the timing but probably not vote on it

Finances

- various concerns about where to get cash to pay for changes e.g., sale of GHUC and ultimately CBUC sites
 - later noted that sites are under national and regional church which has a priority of First Nations reconciliation process and funds from selling church sites may be used for this as part of sharing of wealth when land sales take place
 - comment made that we could be proactive and propose an endowment fund to be used for work on reconciliation efforts within our area
 - perhaps talk with those from other recently sold church sites and find out what provision was made re reconciliation
- Some concerns about lack of clarity of a financial plan for the next 2 – 3 years
 - rentals, Thrift shop and Bazaar provide 35% of our revenues – how to maintain this in the next 1 – 3 years during the transition phase when we are at CBUC site
 - noted that we applied for \$200,000 for the ProVision grant and have only received \$67,000 so far; it is hoped that once we move forward with amalgamation that the region would be willing to provide more funding
 - Investment fund in which we still have \$260,000 - \$270,000 can't be used for operating expenses
 - cash flow over next 4-5 years will be a challenge
 - don't know about lease hold agreements timing with GHUC
 - Can we use land for collateral for start-up money for social enterprise? Project management group will need to work on accessing a line of credit. Don't want to be in debt by the end of the process. Move to 2 – 3 social enterprises as a new way of fund raising. Need to know that national church won't freeze funds from sales of land. Look at how we can be generous for reconciliation and other regional development of churches.
 - if we have a good plan, National Church more likely to back us
 - e.g. a few years ago the national church used funds from sale of a Maple Ridge Church to fund some improvements to Camp Pringle

Staffing

- For first 3 years expectation is that the 4 ministry staff persons will continue
- Some non-ministry staff will be needed to run the organization and over time other staff may be hired to accomplish new plans
- Any non-ministry staff which are let go as staff needs change will be treated fairly

-It is expected that a paid admin. Staff member would be hired for the Thrift shop for expanding and marketing; only will work if there are more volunteers

-fundraising is something St. A's has done a lot of and not part of the CBUC model where they provide more funds through giving; don't expect CBUC people to become involved with the Thrift shop, rather look at other sources of volunteers as per research report from Royal Roads students study of the Thrift Shop

Site concerns

-Is there mould at CBUC site? There is a mould problem in one small hallway. The sanctuary and gym are clear. There are accessible doorways that people can use to avoid area where there is mould.

-Noted that if any of the sites have any contamination these need to be investigated and put up front before there is any sale so that purchasers are aware.

Community involvement

-Don't lose perspective of how we are involved with the community – keep connection and support of the community

Moving forward from here

-There will be another session like this on after church on Sunday; please spread the word to others about what you heard at this meeting; also people were asked to read the Amalgamation Proposal on which the amalgamation vote will be based

-Beyond the concrete decisions about finances and buildings, this is primarily a spiritual question; attendees were asked to individually pray daily for discernment of the spirit to open their heart and ask to be led into what to do about the amalgamation question