

Notes from Amalgamation Question and Answer Session

November 10, 2019 11:30 am St. Aidan's

Session was led by Doug Koch, Council chair. Notes from Nov. 4 session will be put on church website. Attendees were reminded to read the Amalgamation Proposal and report on site selection prior to vote on November 24th.

Several people raised their hands when the group was asked if they were pumped about the idea of amalgamation.

Things that are important to our congregation

Comment made that the Cameo/Ted Bolton Singers event last night was one of the many things that St. Aidan's was about and others listed included the Thursday crafts, Advent lunch, coffee time, weekly meditation, Wednesday afternoon meeting, summer BBQs, book groups. Want to not lose important things in the shuffle. Response was that when we gain more people, there may be even more things that will become important to continue. There is room for a lot of events/activities and some things may morph into new things.

Logistics

When we move for the retrofit, what can possibly continue at the St. Aidan's site? Items mentioned were kids choir as they are used to coming here now and group has grown to 16. Can rentals continue while we plan? Response was that lots of detailed work is yet to be done and we need affirmation from congregations on amalgamation before doing the more detailed work. We'll need a wish list from the joint congregation and then look at budget and prioritize items. Expect some income from sale of properties as National church will want our amalgamation to thrive. Complication of permitting and process for renovation. In a previous renovation of St. Aidan's where only part of the space was renovated, the day care carried on.

Suggestion that the best solution was to keep things going as long as possible e.g., rentals. Other suggestion was to retrofit in parts so activities can be kept going so older people not having to travel further to out of the way site and where mould is present (noted that mould at CBUC is in one small hallway and does not stop access to the offices, sanctuary or hall- look at possibly fixing mould problem in the interim prior to temporary move to CBUC). St. A site complicated to plan renovation but may well have parts we can access as we move forward. After January we could swap sites for worship and arrange for tours of each other's properties. Someone suggested to plan repairs and renovations so we can use the building.

Two reasons to move out of the site at St. Aidan's – one is for renovation and the other is to learn what it is like to leave your church behind. At St. Aidan's we are very attached to our church and have pride in it as our church home and we will need to let go of some of the feeling we have toward the current church.

Renovations

What kind of renovations are planned? Nothing specifically planned so far but suggestions are to correct the narrow stairwell going between the floors as it was a mistake in an earlier construction and we need

to find out if this is something we can redo. Others are possible seismic upgrading (e.g., cement blocks in sanctuary), improve audiovisual and sound systems while maintain current acoustics, improve parking and landscaping.

Maintaining financial income as well as improve design of site

What about renters? May need to move them within the space or may not be possible at some times in the renovation. Know that rental and Thrift Store are both important sources of income at our site. The Thrift store group is looking at a way to make it more sustainable to the next generation with a Board and possible paid administrator. May be moved within building or moved to another site. Someone commented that she had visited a church with a Thrift store which was a store front and thought this was a fabulous idea.

Environmental remediation

Is National church responsible for environmental assessment for CBUC site or is congregation responsible for own church building in this regard. It was thought that the local congregation would be responsible for this. Someone noted that they are sensitive to mould and weren't aware of the smell of mould at a meeting at CBUC.

Environmental remediation is being looked at by the Program Management team. Requested that the environmental issues be resolved prior to move.

Concept of moving to CBUC temporarily

Someone asked what CBUC folk thought of the move to there and was it really necessary. We could switch with services and continue to do other things at St. Aidan's site.

Response was that CBUC was excited about us all moving to their site. It would not be possible to not move out entirely but the time can be minimized, probably to 2 years or less.

Someone noted that although change can result in inconvenience and may have effect on programs, like the Mackenzie interchange project, near the end we can now see it as a good solution. The new congregation will be significantly involved in looking at what changes will occur.

Someone commented that it was not clear when we would be moving from the St. Aidan's site to the Cadboro Bay site. Response was that in the Amalgamation Proposal the draft timeline has this move happening in September 2020. However we will need to address some detailed stuff before then to see if we will stick to that timeline or move it to another date. Comment was to move when we have plans prepared for renovations to this building.

National church ownership of all 3 sites and options for their use

Someone asked whether local people have a say in what happens to those sites that would be sold and suggested a supportive living project rather than single family dwellings for Gordon Head site and have UVic students have experiences at the site. Response was that our new congregation would have quite a bit of say in these decisions but we would need to decide if we wanted to go for the highest financial return or go for the ideal use from a church perspective which may cause delays and have local opposition.

Transportation

Concern expressed about the lack of parking at the St. Aidan's site. Response noted that we do have 2 public lots within two blocks with one in the nearby park and the other at the bottom end of a trail. Also we are near an urban centre and this is downtown to the Shelbourne Valley area. Our site is more accessible for walking and public transit than the other two sites. Someone suggested that we perhaps rent a bus for the short term to CBUC and for the longer term after we move back to the St. Aidan's site to provide easier access to the sites.

Another site

Response to question about the possibility of another site being investigated was that the Asset Management group looked at the possibility of acquiring other property and building a new church on it. The reality was that there aren't currently any blocks of land of sufficient size for us to acquire in East Saanich. In addition if several building sites were put together for sufficient land it would take 3-4 years for Saanich to rezone it as a church and it was thought that Saanich wouldn't really be interested in seeing a large piece of property used for this purpose.

Look at the big picture

Things change over time. We need to take a step forward and then make changes as needed. Identify what we need to accomplish and then base our decisions on this. We know we are losing energy and money as we currently proceed and will benefit from combined congregations energy and financial support. This is an amalgamation, not a take-over.

Options to amalgamation

We can soldier on as we are and could probably do that for a few years but will lose energy as we age. We could revitalize our own church and congregation but will need a new vision to right size it. If we go that road, will need as much or more work than for amalgamation.

Reminders to attendees

Asked to please talk to other people about the meeting, read the two reports – Amalgamation Proposal and Site Selection- and look for information on the church website. Also come for vote on November 24 after church where a couple of related resolutions will be presented prior to the secret ballot vote.