

**Toronto Southeast Presbytery
Mission Strategy Team
8 March 2018
Eastminster United Church**

Minutes

Present: Douglas duCharme (Chair), Lauren Hodgson, Roger Hutchinson, Jim Lewis, Ian Manson (Staff), Ambury Stuart, Ralph Carl Wushke

Regrets: Sarah Miller, Anne Shirley Sutherland

Opening

Team members were welcomed - in particular Jim Lewis who joined us for the first time! Given that the meeting was taking place on International Women's Day, Douglas shared a prayer written for the day by Betty Radford Turcott, an author from Bowmanville, and former UCW National President:

From the first breath of creation, Holy One, you have spoken to the creatures of earth. Whispering hope. Calling for peace. Crying for justice.

Women of all times and situations caught the vision and have worked for the coming of a world of fulfillment and safety for all.

And yet—tyrants and bullies still silence your voice and deny your presence.

On this day when we name the injustices, violence, and degradation women continue to endure, let the silence be broken, the degradation be named, and the violence cease.

As a community of caring, aware, and involved people, let us work together for the world we were shown in a garden so long ago.

May the sacred winds of creation blow through us and through all the lands as we declare in hope that creation is good. So be it and amen.

With this prayer we discussed the “unravelling” of church in society in our time, the rapid changes in what church is for people, what church does, and how church can be re-imagined anew. We shared experiences of degradation and exclusion, and the damage that does to people, and to the church. We noted the continuing and urgent need for safe space, for diversity and inclusion, and the opportunity to create a new vision for the followers of Jesus in our context, a vision shaped by the distinct perspectives, experiences, language and yearnings of women and men.

Minutes from 16 November 2017

We reviewed the Minutes in detail, recognizing that most of the items are once more appearing in the agenda for this meeting, in many cases with an enhanced focus as restructuring moves forward, and decisions are made.

Update on Re-Structuring

Douglas and Ian spoke about progress in the preparatory work on re-structuring that is picking up momentum as Remits are approved, the Boundary Commission's final report is released, staffing models are discussed, and the outlines for a sharing of resources model considered.

A priority-setting discussion took place on 22 February among the four Presbytery Executives, invited together by Toronto Conference. This was intended to begin work towards setting agenda and identifying funding mechanisms for the new Regional Council within a yet-to-be-determined "equitable sharing of resources" model across the church.

Among the priorities identified by Toronto Southeast participants (who included Douglas) were:

- Our work on options for the retention, redevelopment, re-missioning, and trusteeship of **urban church property** as congregations amalgamate, close, or seek to be better stewards of their facilities, in partnership with the communities in which they are located;
- Toronto Southeast's particular process and implementation of **Ministry Articulation (MAP)** has a number of distinct elements that have been very effective, and that we would bring into the application of this programme for congregational mission and priority setting within the new Region;
- Toronto Southeast has also invested in experiments in **New Ministries** of various, alternative kinds (Main and Danforth, Regent Park, Bridges of Hope, Tamil Mission and others). Learnings and evaluations from these can/should be compiled as the church continues to invest in ways to offer alternative ministries and ways to strengthen our traditional communities of faith;
- on - Collaborative work with TUCC, South West Presbytery, and Emmanuel College **Leadership Development Training** for entrepreneurial and innovative practices in ministry is in its early stages, but needs continued, focused work and support;
- Toronto Southeast has a legacy of consistent support and accompaniment of outreach ministries through **Mission Support**, and we are committed to maintaining that.

Since the February gathering, some other things have been identified, such as procedures developed by Education & Students that are valuable and seem to be unique to this Presbytery.

In discussion, it was noted that:

- Toronto Conference, unlike some other Conferences, has operated primarily as four quite distinct Presbyteries rather than one cohesive Conference
- The proposed new staffing model indicates that the new Region will have provision for a (shared) Executive Secretary, a programme staff-person, and an admin staff, and allocated staff from General Council Office for Vocations (also shared) – compared to a current deployment of roughly 18 staff across the Conference and Presbyteries – while Regions can fund and hire additional staff, this represents a significant reduction in staff even taking current areas of duplication into account - also the overall financial picture church-wide is increasingly challenging, with a year-end deficit of over \$2 million despite cuts
- The model for an equitable sharing of financial resources across the church will be challenging to develop, given that Toronto, BC, and Montreal-Ottawa Conferences are among the few that actually have some significant financial resources
- At the same time there is a sense that this moment contains clear elements of excitement and opportunity that we can work together to build upon!

The process of working and planning towards re-structuring is only beginning. It is recognized that members of Mission Strategy have a role and responsibility to follow the progress in these sweeping changes closely, particularly in light of the priorities affirmed and promoted in Presbytery's Mission Strategy Framework.

Update on Leadership Training

Efforts to create a way of equipping ministry personnel with skills, capacity, and experience for entrepreneurial, innovative forms of faith community have been underway in recent years with a lead being taken by TUCC. There is strong interest from Emmanuel College, and others (including South West Presbytery), and research into comparable initiatives in the U.K. and in Canada at VST, and BC Conference's *LeaderShift* programme has taken place. Funding has been sought to pursue work on reaching a consensus about what sorts of training and education is needed, and how to best provide those things. Next steps are gradually being clarified, but there is also a desire to not duplicate other existing offerings (though often those do not reflect a United Church theology, ethos, or set of values), and to not overly institutionalize the training initiative, but to follow a simple, collaborative model - such as the portable and practical training programmes for Interim Ministry through the ecumenical Interim Ministry Network.

Lauren noted work that she is doing with Christine Jerrett, through EDGE, to also respond to this need, working with Emmanuel to seed entrepreneurial leadership

training into existing programmes – they have also been exploring partnership with Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (which has graduate certificate programmes in Urban Ministry, Church Planting and Revitalization, and Urban Change). They have also been working with the Centre for Progressive Renewal in a similar direction. The goal is to identify people who have the skills we are looking for and need, but who don't fit our typical boxes for theological education.

Proposed Task Group on Property and Mission Discussions

Issues and opportunities related to church property have been arising with increasing frequency – how to retain property once a congregation closes or amalgamates, how to assist in the burdens of trusteeship, how to support congregations looking to redevelop their property, and so on.

Following numerous conversations with Finance & Property, a project has come together to form a Presbytery Task Group with the aim of delivering a church property use and management plan, incorporating an imaginative use of historic church resources and current assets, and a resilient and hopeful faith that God is not done with us yet. This initiative views church property as an asset rather than a burden, as something to be used to accelerate mission and innovation.

The outcome is intended to be a plan for using and managing church property that is (unlike the CMHC property inventory done for General Council Offices last year), grounded in a mission strategy that draws on our solidly rooted and progressive faith commitments and values, together with our current urban context.

It is hoped that the outcome will include options to: Plant new church properties – identify growing areas in the city where the United Church can seed or incubate new faith community; Redevelop or re-purpose existing church properties to meet needs of surrounding community (e.g., social housing, refugee supports, centres for faith, justice and the arts, centres of faith for college and university students); Continue existing building use – to benefit faith communities and neighbourhoods where existing use is thriving and making a positive contribution, or; Close and sell existing facilities – where costs, building conditions and community context (e.g., demographics) do not support a continuing United Church presence.

It is hoped that the project can begin (recruiting a small Task Group, hiring a consultant) once funding is in place, and to be concluded by early September 2018. The outcomes from this work will be provided to Mission Strategy, Finance & Property, and Presbytery Executive for consideration, and in order to develop a strategy for providing this work in turn to the new Region for its long-term planning and implementation.

Discussion and input from Mission Strategy was very supportive of this initiative going forward, looking forward to coordinating a response with other teams.

Changes in Presbytery Mission Animator's Work-Plan

Ian provided an update on the human resources decision that meant his contract could not, within accepted labour policy, extend beyond the end of the life of Conference and Presbytery as employer. As a result, his contract as Mission Animator will conclude at the end of this year. This has necessitated a significant re-focusing of his work towards projects that are deliverable in a much shorter time-frame, and priorities that can be addressed before the Region comes into existence, since there is no way of knowing how it will shape its own work.

Among other things (such as the congregational training with Alan Roxburgh on Meeting God in the Neighbourhood), Ian is also working to explore options for the former Church of the Master site at Lawrence Avenue East and Markham Road, to discern what needs and opportunities exist for generating new ministry by a re-missioning or re-purposing of that location.

Reflections and Follow-up on *Environics* Training - December 4th

Ambury spoke to his deeply thought-through evaluation and reflection on the *Environics* training (circulated to team members prior to the meeting), noting among a number of other points the difference between demographics, and *Environics* social values polling data. The latter, he observes, is more valid when applied to a larger context than the urban community around a particular congregation.

The *Environics* training has been beneficial for congregational work on MAPs, as congregations are pushed to include community engagement in stronger ways in their own internal focus and assessment. Ian noted that MAPs will continue in some form ("Living the Faith Story" or some other title perhaps) into the new structure.

Also, Douglas reported that coming out of the training focus, *Environics* has now assigned two liaison staff to us and that he and Anne Shirley will be having a conference call with them to connect and determine ways they can assist our use of *Environics* data and analytics.

Next Meeting: Thursday 26 April 2018, 10:00 a.m. – 12 Noon
(this will be confirmed)