

**NOTES OF A GATHERING OF THE CONGREGATION
OF SYDENHAM-HERITAGE UNITED CHURCH
On Sunday, September 24, 2023**

Meeting was called to order by Sharon Davidson

Copies of the General Operating Statement to the end of August 2023 was distributed.

Sharon opened the meeting by reminding all that this is not a Congregational Meeting. Instead this is an opportunity to share information, specifically about the next steps for Ministerial Coverage as Paul transitions to his new position; there will be no motions or voting today.

There are many Board members in attendance today. Maureen is still on vacation in Scotland.

Sharon asked that we extend Gods Grace to each other as we make a commitment to share with each other today.

Sharon shared that the Board was advised of Paul's resignation late in the morning of August 31st at 11:15am. Shortly after noon hour the same day Paul placed his resignation letter in the days edition of Snippets.

While she was not in church on September 10th, Sharon viewed the service later and was aware of the outpouring of emotion from Paul and the congregation at that service.

She stated the Board is aware there are feelings of sadness, anger, questions as to how did this happen, we waited so long for a minister to be selected why is it ending so soon. She further labelled feelings of anxiety and fear about the future of SHUC.

The Congregational Meeting originally scheduled for today could not go on due to insufficient notice, therefore, the focus of this meeting will change the focus from Options Committee discussions to Ministerial changes. This is probably a good thing as good decisions are not made when we are feeling so many strong emotions.

We are a resilient Congregation. Heritage and Sydenham both had challenges before our "marriage".

While in attendance at the Shared United Church Meeting Paul's resignation was shared. Fairview is searching for a minister, St. Andrew's has just welcomed a new minister.

Much as we did alongside Wayne Beamer several years ago, we will again explore and identify options for the future of SHUC with the assistance of an Intentional Interim Minister. At the September Board Meeting a unanimous vote determined that an Intentional Interim Minister will be requested for SHUC, and a facilitator of healing to help us engage in dialogue and to heal. This request has been sent to the Regional Office with a start date as close as possible to November 5, 2023. It was clarified that Paul was owed vacation and study leave time which moved his final date from November 30th (as stated in his letter) to November 5, 2023.

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The Board has identified that assistance to deal with conflict in the congregation should be considered, but this was not part of a motion as it would need to be endorsed by the Congregation.

Sharon opened the floor to any questions/comments related to this plan.

Gail Merritt

- Thanked Janet Bell for her powerful sharing this morning
- Thanked Rita Mustard for the lovely Thanksgiving display
- Thanked Paul and Marjorie for the gifts they brought to SHUC making this a place of Community Based Worship
- May God Bless them in their future
- We have had two great ministers leave in five years, we have a great problem

Darrell Picketts

- We are hearing a lot of issues of blame for losing Paul
- I feel particularly in this circumstance
- I was part of the Search Committee that called Paul
- Paul gave us exactly what we asked for – he has led us in forward looking Christianity
- We said we wanted to be a congregation with Outreach to the community and Paul has done fantastic work at Outreach
- The problem is we have not been following his lead
- I have failed to follow his lead, however, not everyone has failed, Janet demonstrated she heard and followed the lead
- Paul has tried to lead us forward in change and to supervise that change, we have preferred to do what we have done, sit comfortably in the pew
- This was worsened by COVID, timing was such Paul did not have any way to move into the congregation
- I echo that his ministry has been exceptional

Brian Merritt

- What happened at the Board level?
- Why was there no transparency at the Board level?
- There was conflict at the Board level

Terry Matheson

- I am hurt by all the finger pointing
- The decision has been made by Paul, he is leaving
- There is nothing to tell from the Board that hasn't already been shared in Board Minutes
- There are conflicts within this congregation and we need outside help

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Paul Shepherd

- I wrote the letter to the Congregation so this would not happen
- There is too much underlying conflict in this congregation
- I did not include this in the letter, but I have shared with several of you – a year ago I realized that you need an Intentional Interim Minister to deal with the conflict in the church
- I began to pay more attention to the how the congregation functions
- I prepared to leave
- Let's warm up to the Intentional Interim Minister
- I am leaving because I love you
- You need to deal with the conflict logjams
- I be generalizing but there is a lot of 'toing and froing' at the Board level

Marilyn Markle

- These road blocks have been here the past 4 to 5 years
- The Board would rather just do it their way
- Ministers are told what to do
- We (congregation) sit back and let ourselves be controlled
- We need to speak our minds

Norm Greenfield

- Enough nit picking
- We have lost two ministers
- Need to find a way to stop this and address the problems with the leadership and the congregation
- Lets start the search for a new Minister

Darrell Picketts

- I spoke with Paul about the Intentional Interim Minister and told him I had explored who might be available in the region
- Paul told me the first thing to do is to decide what we want...not who we want
- I see three bullets
 1. Conflict – I see the conflict but don't understand it
 2. Direction – help us find the direction we are prepared to go
 3. Leadership – is not in communication
- When we came together Sydenham brought the Sunday Dinners and Heritage the Wednesday Breakfasts
- All that has stopped
- The leadership and the people doing the work have not gone

BJ Leighton

- We need to establish a Nominating Committee
- We need people on the committees of the Board

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- It is the same board because new people have not stepped forward
- The Nominating Committee needs to be active
- Original model was designed for regular breaks for Board Members – the breaks are good for peoples well being and the new blood is good for the congregation

Verna Timpener

- Some Board Members are not visible at church
- We are doing the same things over and over
- Board didn't know rules for announcing meeting – its in the Manual
- We don't need to have a board – that's in the manual
- We can have a Congregational Meeting once a month
- The errors by the Board are not the fault of Sharon – a lot of work is done by her, mistakes and oversights are all our fault

Sue Cross

- We are still called Sydenham-Heritage United
- We did vote about the name and kept this name
- We need to consider a new name
- Synergy – the power of a group when they are working together is greater than the total power of the each working separately
- Should be considered as new name

Bob MacMillan

- Who are we?
- What do we want to do?
- Is the focus primarily members of congregation or Outreach to the Community?
- Need to find agreement.

Seeing no further questions or comments, Sharon thanked everyone for their sharing and thoughts.

Paul closed the Gathering with Prayer.

Sharon Davidson, Co-Chairperson

Maureen Hall-Gilmore, Co-Chairperson

Jacque Scatcherd, Secretary