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**NEXT STEPS TOWARD PARTNERSHIP  
WITH NORTHMINSTER AND ST. DAVID'S UNITED CHURCHES**

**March 22, 2022**

Both the congregations of St David's and Northminster are reflecting on the announcement of a partnership opportunity, and how it could fulfill the needs of each church while St David's is without a lead minister and Northminster is in need of a building. Our Ad Hoc Committees from both churches continue to meet with the assistance of Chinook Winds Region's Personnel Minister Rev. Stephen Harper.

The response at both the Board and congregational levels has been favourable on moving forward, informed by the needs and voices of each congregation. For Northminster, we are also navigating the sense of grief in thinking about our time in our current space coming to a close. This grief will be very real, no matter the timeline we follow. We need to hold each other with great care as we face this reality.

Discussions that have been happening and questions we have been receiving are summarized below for you to consider. If you have any questions that aren't captured here, please reach out so we can hear more from you.

**How have plans been unfolding?**

Committees and staff members are beginning to connect, to learn more about how our difference processes work and what logistics need to be considered.

Our Worship Committees and Music Teams met twice to get acquainted. Discussions explored our many traditions, including whether or not we use the lectionary, how often we celebrate communion, how we include children and youth in worship, how volunteers participate in hosting and leadership, and how we have worshipped and used technology for live-streaming during Covid.

Barb Johnson and Rev. Nancy have been to St David's to have a tour of the building, and to meet some of the staff. And Rev. Nancy has been in conversation with the chair of the Affirming Ministries committee at St David's.

St David's invited Northminster to attend their online Friendship Club. About 10 people from Northminster participated and it was a good first step in getting to know each other. Northminster will reciprocate!

Worship committees, music teams, live-streaming volunteers, and ministry staff will continue to plan and explore the ways we can blend our worship into one. We are also working toward a goal of beginning worship at St David's May 1, and our worship will be offered both in-person and live-streamed.

**May 1<sup>st</sup> seems rushed. What are the benefits of moving now?**

Moving to St David's at this point will buy Northminster time to envision things we are hopeful about. A move will reduce overhead and eliminate some current expenses we will no longer need to pay for (internet, photocopying, licensing for music, etc), and allow us time to breathe easier.

The two congregations will remain independent of each other financially and for governance purposes, but the agreement we will put in place is for Northminster to provide a minister in exchange for use of the St David's building free of charge. And both churches will benefit from the staff and volunteers from each church.

For now our agreement is to stay indefinitely at St David's until our Task Force presents us with a plan for our future space. When the Northminster building sells we can invest the money into something such as the United Church of Canada Foundation, earning more interest than typical market funds today. The interest may be used to pay current expenses or invested in future plans. We have many options to consider with the Task Force's leadership and moving to St David's now will buy us time to make the right choices.

### **What about our current space?**

Our office space and staff will gradually transition over to St David's in late spring. There may be other traditions and events to plan and hold in the Northminster building as well. Much later down the road, when our building sale is complete, a decommissioning service will be held.

Beyond worship, we can determine over the coming months the order and timing of when other aspects of congregational life can move over to spaces at St David's. We will continue to hold outreach programs like the Kerby Bread Market, our Truth and Reconciliation conversations and projects, perhaps even funerals, and an upcoming evening commemorative candlelight service in the Northminster building...beyond May 1st. Rentals will continue as well, maintaining some revenue flow.

### **How about our children and youth?**

Please watch for upcoming information about the ways our children and youth programs will be moving alongside Sunday worship. We'll be inviting our families to be part of the move, so that the transition is exciting and gentle for the younger ones. We will find ways to include children and youth to have direct involvement in packing and moving, and setting up their favourite items from Northminster in the spaces they can enjoy at St David's. There is also an existing playground structure onsite! We will plan to celebrate the end of the year there in June with our kidZone Sunday traditions.

### **What are the next steps?**

Next steps will include our various committees connecting to get to know each other.

The Board of Northminster has made a recommendation that the congregation be presented with the following motion at the Annual General Meeting April 3<sup>rd</sup>:

That Northminster United Church move its worship services to St David's United Church effective May 1, 2022, with all remaining programs, meetings, and outreach moving at later dates.

To help us all through this time of remembering, celebrating our years in this building, and grieving the change, there will be opportunities in and out of worship for your participation. We'll have to make decisions about what precious items are packed and brought with us, for example. While some items in our building may be included in the sale, other things may need to go into storage, and other items may need to be sold or disposed of. The Board will be giving direction on this. And we'll need the help of committees to take on aspects of moving/storage which fall under their umbrella of responsibilities. It is a team effort!

### **Ahead of the April 3<sup>rd</sup> decision:**

As this conversation and plan unfolds, there continues to be many questions. Our committee is wanting to hear those questions ahead of the AGM if possible so we can answer them and see where there still might be gaps of information we need to fill ahead of April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please reach out to one of the committee members by phone or email as soon as possible so we can explore your questions with you.

This is an on-going process that will take time and conversation, and transition will not happen overnight. We want to thank everyone for the excitement they have shared, as well as the questions and concerns. Please continue to reach out to us and watch for ways that you can help participate in the next steps of this partnership.

Sincerely,

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