

MINUTES
ST. PHILIP PARISH COUNCIL
Tuesday, May 19, 2020 @ 7:00 p.m.
via ZOOM

Present: Christopher, Ken, Gillian, Jennifer, Judith, Larry, Karen, Sharon, Dave, Raymond, Greg, Esther, Ged

1. Prayer Time

Christopher read a passage from 2 Peter in which Peter speaks of his coming death and departure from this life. Peter is concerned to remind his audience that God has already given them everything they need. They are facing a time of persecution and loss, but in spite of that, they already have all they need. It is important for us to also remember this also, to remember who we are in this present time of uncertainty: we are created in the image of God and we are beings loved by God.

2. David Geddes

Christopher spoke about David Geddes, who passed away yesterday (May 18). David was a part of our church for over 30 years and served in many ways, including being treasurer and member of parish council for many years. He started the church's website and ran the sound for the 11:15 service. He loved God and the church.

Motion

moved by Gillian Fosdick, seconded by Dave Conway

On behalf of the parish of St. Philip, Oak Bay, we the Parish Council give thanks for the life of David Geddes. We rejoice in the many gifts and deep commitment and faith David shared as part of our community. We pray God's blessing upon Nancy and all of David's family.

Carried unanimously.

3. Services and Other Connections Within the Congregation

Christopher asked for reflections on how the Zoom Sunday services are going. He has received numerous emails expressing gratitude and appreciation for them. On the other hand, he also quoted the reflection from a recent clergy meeting that the congregations that come out of this time well will be not the ones with the slickest online services but the ones that nurture connections between people - particularly in small groups, or pairs. He asked for ideas about how we can continue to increase the sense of connection within the church, even if it's just to touch base with people.

Virtual Home Groups

Ged commented that his home group has moved beyond the checking in stage to start to once again grapple with more substantial content. Ged offered to help to encourage others on that path to establish fulfilling home group virtual connections.

Connecting Single Women

Karen said that Christopher was helping to encourage something to get single women together as living on your own can be lonely.

Physical Gatherings?

Greg reminded us that we are now able to get together in groups of six. Christopher felt that we should be cautious about the church officially encouraging physical gatherings.

Youth Group

Greg also pointed out that the youth group meetings on Sundays seem to be very successful. His daughter is enjoying them. The youth group gatherings are carrying on quite a long while after the service for adults is over.

What about the future of physical gatherings?

Christopher referred to the document he sent out from the Unitarians which forecast no physical gatherings as church until May 2021. Larry suggested that there may be specific factors in the US that don't apply here. Jennifer said that the Unitarians in Canada have also been developing long range plans so they are ready for the possibility it will be another year or more.

Karen asked if it is the Diocese that will decide whether we meet in person. Christopher confirmed that is the case.

It was asked if we have the option of coming up with a modified version of gathering physically that meets the recommendations. Ken, Karen and Ged suggested that we could perhaps come up with smaller gatherings that met these criteria. There was discussion about what we would be achieve with these. For example, singing and communion will not be allowed and people would, of course, have to maintain a distance from each other. What would this serve? Gillian and Judith said that there is so much anxiety in the city generally that it seems too difficult right now to try to come up something that doesn't add to the fear.

4. Pre-School Rental

Sharon said that they are not sure what they will be doing - possibly returning with a reduced number of children in fall.

5. Treasurer's Report and the Financial Situation

Ged's narrative report was sent out by email prior to the meeting and Christopher shared it on our screens.

Ged is very concerned that the rate of giving has declined to 60% of our usual rate. He clarified what this means. The slope of donations until March 15 matched previous years by over 95%. Since that time, a new slope has emerged which indicates the present rate of donations is now only around 60% of the former rate. The old rate of giving worked out to an average of around \$740 per day whereas now it is around \$400 a day. This decline does not include the drop in preschool amount which is small compared to the change in giving.

Greg asked where the decline has taken place. Ged said that confidentiality prevents the treasurer from knowing the details of who gives what. Generally speaking, it seems there has been no change in preapproved deposits. Most of the drop has been in envelope / plate offerings.

Ged projects a \$100,000 shortfall by the end of the year. He feels we need to come up with a revised budget and share it with the congregation.

Christopher pointed out the only way to attempt to balance the budget with this reduced rate of income is by cutting salaries (and people).

Jennifer wondered if Alice might be able to collect government payments if she lost her job at St. Philip. Raymond and others guessed that she might earn enough at VIHA to be ineligible for CERB.

Ged told us that Gail Gauthier wrote to treasurers today to say that the diocese had applied to the government for wage subsidy for those being laid off. As far as we understand it, this is money for businesses and non-profits who have seen their revenues decline by 30% or more to avoid layoffs.

Ged thought that the best process would be for him to talk with the wardens and rector to try to come up with a new budget and then bring it to parish council. He suggests that we continue as is for the rest of May and come back with a plan for the months following. Gillian pointed out that the budget has been approved by congregation at the AGM and there would need be some sort of process of approval by the parish of a revised budget.

Raymond felt that we should approach the congregation to make them aware of the situation before making cuts. He said that the church has shown itself to step up with a spirit of generosity. Greg, Judith and Jennifer also felt that we should wait. Ken said that we might be pleasantly surprised about giving bouncing back after a time as it often does after summer. However, Ged is concerned that it might take several months to find out if income increased and by then we would be deeper in the hole.

In conclusion, Christopher said that these should be the next two steps we follow:
1) We will await word from the Diocese (Gail) to find out about the possibility of wage subsidies from government.

2) Once we have that information, the wardens and treasurer will convene a meeting (including some others - the whole parish council?) to look at the options for a revised budget. The meeting should take place without Christopher (as he draws a salary, he felt he was in conflict of interest).

There also seemed to be a general consensus that the congregation needs to be informed about the situation before cuts were made but it was less clear about the timing of that appeal for increased giving. It was observed that it would be a mistake to make a fundraising appeal that temporarily brought our income back up to be a bit less than 30% under normal if that was the cut off to receive a subsidy.

6. Christopher's Vacation Time

Christopher was wondering if he could take his holidays in summer. Who would lead Zoom Church? Numerous voices spoke up to assure him that he should go on holiday with our blessing and not worry. There is enough labour available to make services happen.

Next scheduled meeting: June 16.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen
(2 Cors. 13:14)