

Report to Congregation – October 4, 2019

Preparatory Work to Appreciative Inquiry

The Visioning Team (Susan Brockley, Karen Hollis, Shelagh Huston, Owen McCooley and Betty Schultze) has been working diligently through the spring and summer in preparation for our visioning process. As we considered and discerned the preparatory work before us (considering our congregational history, our stories, our connections to the community and prayer), we recognized much of it as work that was done during the amalgamation process or shortly after Karen was called. So we took it upon ourselves to synthesize the information we already have (Shared Ministry Agreement, History of St. Martin's, History of GUC, CCG Church Profile 2017, Hollis report to council June 2018 – these documents can be found pinned to the "Our Church" bulletin board in the hall) and present it to you now as a snapshot of who we are, Christ Church Gabriola.

A Snapshot of Christ Church Gabriola

Remember our History:

Gabriola United Church – Stewards of Sacred Space

The United Church building was built on donated land over 100 years ago, and was given additions and upgrades as the needs changed over the years; the windows in the sanctuary and hall continue to be a particular treasure. Because of the continual stewardship of this space, it blesses and supports a huge portion of our congregational life and we are grateful!

St. Martin of Tours – Ecumenical Relationships

The congregation bound together and gathered faithfully through the years. Even without a permanent home, they always found a way to worship, and they did so in part by working with ecumenical partners. This practice challenged and enriched their worship life – was even at times heartbreaking – and kept them focused on the central aspects of our Christian faith.

Christ Church Gabriola – A Place of Heart

Throughout the congregation is a sense of togetherness and a huge sense of accomplishment, not just for merging the two congregations together, but for the ethos of love and care that has developed in our midst through the process. "We care for each other," "we are committed to listening, our work ethic, a sense of belonging;" "Christ is present with us." Commitment to our community through Christ is the foundation on which all else is built as we move forward. (*Hollis report to council, June 2018, after small group gatherings*)

Learn Our Stories:

Personal stories are like onions or artichokes – you peel off a layer, celebrating what you learn about the other, knowing that in each of us is a deep well of human experience that cannot be exhausted even in a lifetime. Many in our congregation have been learning and sharing life stories for decades and some of us are just beginning to share the first few layers – more to be revealed in time and

over “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?” conversations! While the details of our stories are difficult to share in a snapshot, here are some general characteristics that surface again and again . . .

With some important exceptions, we are retired, former Christians who come from Anglican and United backgrounds. Each of us made a life choice to live on a small island and follow a call from God to live here. In our professional lives, we are/were educators (probably 50% of the congregation), parents, scientists/engineers/technicians/tech specialists, helping professions and services, farmers, real estate/bankers/insurance. We are immigrants from the UK, the US, other places in the world, and natural-born Canadians. We value healthy community, creation care, and making the world more just and sustainable for coming generations.

Connections with the Community:

The Visioning Team thanks you for your participation in the map exercise, and acknowledges its imperfections. Thank you to Susan Brockley and Lisa Griffith for synthesizing the data.

As of the end of September, over 40 people stuck pins in our map and tied yarn to help give a visual representation of the connections between Christ Church Gabriola and the wider community. This was a participation rate of about 100% of our average Sunday attendance. Thank you!

Outside of the church, Christ Church Gabriola’s largest number of connections is to community service organizations. We have 31 connections in total to 13 different community service organizations. There are also 22 connections to 9 other social or special interest groups and an additional 21 connections to 10 other groups on Gabriola. In the words of Lisa Griffith, “I have the image of seeds, widely dispersed. Or many hands, reaching out and linking to the community.”

Our congregation is rooted in this community and has been for a long time. While many of us are public about what we do outside the church walls, some of us are more private and casual about our connections, often doing things that don’t fit in a category on the map. Loving and caring for each other is a way of life on Gabriola – in that way, CCG is a bit of a microcosm of our wider community.

We also serve the congregation directly with a total of 28 connections to 9 different CCG ministries and 27 connections to Sunday Worship activities. There are another 17 connections to church committees and governance.

As we look at this visual of our community connections, we wonder things like: are we doing too much? Are there places that need our involvement? Are our priorities in the right place? Gabriola is home to many active ministries; what is the role of CCG in such a socially engaged community?

Prayer:

In the spring we offered a few prayer experiences, along with a prayer guide to engage the congregation in new practices or deepen familiar ones. The core of our prayer is “God, what is your call for us?” The prayer guide is still available in the church hall.

Next Steps for Appreciative Inquiry

Thank you to everyone who participated in the exercise in worship on September 29. You offered answers to the questions: “What do you like about our congregational life?” and “What do you want more of?” The Visioning Team is thrilled with your responses and will be informed by them as we discern Appreciative Inquiry questions.

By the end of October, the Visioning Team should be settled on a list of questions and will invite the congregation into further conversation.

Our intent with this document is to lift up a snapshot of who we are, however we know we don't all see "who we are" in the same way. If you would like to offer feedback on this document, please do so in writing to RevKarenHollis@gmail.com or deliver a note to the church office. Thank you!!

Blessings,

CCG Visioning Team

Susan Brockley, Karen Hollis, Shelagh Huston, Owen McCooey, & Betty Schultze

I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last . . . (John 15:15-16)

So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith. (James 2:17-18)