

**First Metropolitan United Church
Board Meeting Minutes for August 18, 2022**

Present: Edeana Malcolm, Marketa Mellows, Ross Breckon, Emily Macdonald, Linden Holmen, Larry Scott, Rev. Shelagh MacKinnon, Rev. Cheryl Black (corresponding member). A quorum was present.

1. Call to Order – Chair, Edeana Malcolm, called the meeting to order on Zoom at 3:00 pm on 18 August 2022.

2. Territorial Acknowledgement and Opening Prayer – Larry Scott

3. Corresponding Member: Larry Scott/Ross Breckon: That Cheryl Black (Voluntary Associate Minister) be a corresponding member for this meeting, because of her significant involvement in two business items.

CARRIED.

4. Approval of the Consent Agenda

4.1. Motion: Larry Scott/Marketa Mellows — That the Consent Agenda for the August 18, 2022 Board Meeting be agreed as circulated prior to the Board meeting, including: the July 20, 2022 Board Meeting Draft Minutes for adoption; the July 26, 2022 Special Board Meeting Draft Minutes for adoption.”

CARRIED.

5. Minister’s Report – Rev. Shelagh MacKinnon

- Shelagh expressed thanks for Minister Emeritus Allan Saunders and Voluntary Associate Minister Cheryl Black, leading Sunday worship on 14 August 2022.
- Thanks to members of the Future Search Group for the energy, care and faithfulness they have shown in meeting weekly over the summer. Likewise, the Evolving Church Group meets next week.
- Ross, Robin, Cheryl and Shelagh attended the first Sunday afternoon service of the AbbeyChurch. We look forward to learning how to cohabit our space together.
- Tressa Brotsky, Communications Specialist for Pacific Mountain Region, now has her office on the second floor of the Christian Education wing, and we welcome her.
- Alma United Church, near Waterloo, is both celebrating its 149th anniversary and advertising the sale of its building for \$550,000. Their situation is emblematic of United Church congregations across the country, facing the challenge of changing times.
- At First Met we are facing our own challenge as the congregation enters discussions about the future of our faith community. The Board and ministry teams will have to make sure that we have this discussion in as many places as possible with as many people as possible in as many ways as possible, so that everyone feels enfranchised in the process.
- Lauren Paterson is being a great asset in the Church Office and we look forward to all that she will contribute with her many gifts.

6. Ministry & Personnel — Ross Breckon

6.1 Motion: Ross Breckon/Linden Holmen — That the meeting go *in camera* for M&P report. CARRIED.

6.2 The meeting return from *in camera*, at the conclusion of the M&P report, at 3:50 pm.

7. Treasurer’s Report – Ross Breckon

7.1 Administration

- a. Lauren Paterson officially joined First Met on August 8, 2022, as our new Office Administrator. She will spend the next few weeks learning First Met our processes and systems from Liane Clark and Katya Rummyantseva and our other staff members. We will also have a video introducing Lauren.
- b. Currently Lauren is working 9am – 4pm Sunday through Thursday. Beginning the second week of September Lauren will be working Monday – Friday, 9am – 4pm. The F&A Committee is working on assembling a volunteer roster to provide office coverage on Sundays from 10:00 am – 11:00am and 12:00pm – 1:00pm. Lauren will provide backup AV coverage for the Sunday services if required. Her

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- original job description listed Sunday as a working day, but Ross is able to consult with Lauren and M&P about this mutually agreeable change that is more amenable to Lauren's family life.
- c. A reminder that a congregational mailout is being planned for August 29 and will include the Newsletter (contributions due by Aug 15) and other material being assembled by the staff.
 - d. Some Board discussion occurred, noting the very limited summer hours for the church office being open. The goal would be to move towards a model where the office is open 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, Monday-Friday, in the fall. These hours would put us more in line with the hours of other offices in the community, and make us more accessible to the congregation.
 - e. Liane Clark is organizing a welcome desk in the entrance lobby off Balmoral Rd, staffed by volunteers, who would act as greeters on certain busy weekdays — Monday and Wednesday. This is an experiment that helps the church seem more welcoming, and it would also help with security.

7.2 Finances

First Met financial results to the end of June 2022 are tracking reasonably well to the 2022 budget, except as noted below.

- a) The total revenue received for the first half of 2022 (not including Foundation contributions) is \$235, 807 or approximately 47% of the annual revenue budgeted for 2022. The reason that revenue is not 50% or higher at the six-month point is due to the seasonal pattern of givings and program activities which are weighted slightly more heavily to the second half of the year.
- b) The total expenses for the first half of 2022 are \$488,138 or approximately 51% of the annual expenses budgeted for 2022. The reason expenses are higher than 50% at the six-month point is due entirely to the consequences of the protracted cold weather experienced by Victoria in the spring of 2022 and the unprecedented increase in energy costs since the beginning of the 2022. Our oil and gas expenses in the first half of 2022 were approximately \$28,000 higher than in the same period of 2021. Without those added costs First Met's year to date expenses would be tracking at 48% of the 2022 annual budgeted amount.

7.3 Letting

- a) **AbbeyChurch** held its first worship service in the sanctuary on August 7, 2022. A small contingent from First Met including Ross and Robin Breckon, Rev Shelagh MacKinnon, and Rev Cheryl Black attended the service to welcome the AbbeyChurch leaders and congregation to our sanctuary. AbbeyChurch welcomes First Met congregants to attend its services which are normally held at 4:00pm on Sundays. This regular pattern will get established in the fall.
- b) In July First Met entered into a letting agreement with the Pacific Mountain Region to supply office space for **Tressa Brotsky**, who is the Communications Specialist with the Region; she lives and works in Victoria. Tressa is taking over office 2012A in the Christian Education Wing, adjacent to the office occupied by AbbeyChurch. Tressa moved in on August 7, 2022.
- c) During the week of August 15, **NAI Commercial**, the real estate brokerage, contracted to help First Met to find new tenants for our vacant space, will begin showing our property to prospective tenants. The process of securing new tenants is expected to take six months.
- d) The **Victoria Symphony Society** (VSS) has expressed a preference for renting the Fellowship Hall, as opposed to the (more expensive) sanctuary. Their first rehearsal (a trial of the space) will be on September 13 and we anticipate \$15,000-\$16,000 rental income from VSS for the upcoming season. We would provide one parking space for a VSS truck in our north parking lot (off North Park). The society would also require some storage space for instruments; Ross will consult with Building Supervisor about the request. VSS would be paying additional rent for parking and storage.

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7.4 Upcoming Fall Activities

- a) Finance and Administration has begun the planning for several important fall activities including the 2022 Stewardship campaign and preparation of the 2023 Budget.
- b) Please contact Cheryl Black or Ross Breckon if you are interested in helping F&A with either of these activities. Stay tuned for more information.
- c) Cheryl Black suggested we might adopt the practice of asking congregation members to make a special Christmas gift to the church, to help offset our deficit. Consensus was that this is a good idea. It was referred to Finance and Administration, with a view to coordinating with any other special appeals.

8. Strategic Plan update - Edeana Malcolm

- 8.1 **Refugee Sponsorship:** Edeana reported that the balance in our Refugee Fund is \$27,062 and we would ultimately make this amount available to the Inter-Cultural Association for its funding of the sponsorship of a refugee from Afghanistan.
- 8.2 Our contact is **Robin Stevenson** — a Victoria writer and head of a refugee sponsorship group called *Friendship and Freedom*, associated with the Inter-Cultural Association (which acts as a funding broker for *Friendship and Freedom's* refugee work).

9. Property Management Task Group (PMTG) – Linden Holmen

The following developments have occurred or are underway:

- 9.1 Quote for installing **noise reduction measures:** The Property Management Task Group (PMTG) is examining the financial viability of installing noise reduction measures in the ceiling of the lower floor of the HBA under the sanctuary to reduce noise transmission from rehearsals in the sanctuary to a level such that the noise levels in offices in the lower level will not disturb occupants of those offices. On August 4, BAP Acoustics submitted its final report which provided specifications to achieve the desired noise reduction. Because that company does not prepare cost estimates or quotes for doing the work, the PMTG has searched for contractors who will bid on the work. Most contractors contacted are too busy to submit a bid. However, one contractor known to BAP Acoustics, and which has knowledge of the propriety system cited by BAP and has experience with it, has expressed interest in providing a quote. That company has obtained detailed information about the job and is expected to provide a quote in the near future. Once the PMTG has received the quote, it will conduct a cost-benefit analysis to reach a conclusion on whether the work is merited.
- 9.2 Study on new **heating and ventilating** system for the Heritage Building & Annex (HBA): This study should have been completed by now. The consultant, Rocky Point Engineering, has reported that a report on the study results is expected in the near future.
- 9.3 Proposal on study to develop **heating and ventilating systems** for the CEW and FH: On August 3, Rocky Point Engineering submitted a proposal to the PMTG to develop a design for a new heating and ventilation system for the CEW and FH. The cost of the study is \$5,250 plus an estimated charge of \$1,400 for a possible electrical engineering study and \$1,400 for a possible structural engineering study. These studies can provide the basis for work to change the existing systems in these buildings.
- 9.4 Discovery of reports on **hazardous materials:** As a result of efforts by the Property Committee to find any reports on studies of hazardous materials in the CEW and FH, it learned that Colliers had conducted such studies and reported on them in 2019. The consultant who prepared the reports for Colliers has provided the Property Committee with copies of their reports on these studies. They will be useful if the Board decides (on the basis of a recommendation from the PMTG) to conduct the work discussed in Item 3 above.

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10. Team Reports —

10.1 Future Search Group — Larry Scott

Larry circulated an *Overview of the Future Search Group* for review by the Board. See Appendix 1. It was agreed that this two-page summary could go on the church web site and also be included in (or with) the fall newsletter. The overview conveys the gist of the FSG work, plus a timeline for consultation with the congregation this fall. The full report will come to the Board for a special meeting after church (12:30 pm) on September 11 for vetting and approval, before distribution to the congregation shortly thereafter. The first informational meeting for the congregation should happen after church on September 18th, with smaller group conversations and survey work (both online and print) happening until a final congregational meeting where the Board would recommend a specific option for a vote, likely on October 23rd. We would then have a decision about future directions, before the stewardship campaign starts in November.

10.2 Board of Trustees — Larry Scott.

- a) The Landowner Transparency Act (2021) no longer requires churches to disclose ownership of their property to the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia. We do not have to submit anything, according to advice provided by the Executive Minister of Pacific Mountain Region.
- b) As of the end of August, FMUC Foundation will have transferred \$360,540 to FMUC. This represents \$170,540 from the Memorial Stabilization Reserve and \$190,000 from the Memorial Endowment Fund. In the case of the MSR, we can only use up to the amount of last year's interest to cover deficits in 2022; we have reached that maximum, so will draw on the MEF for the rest of the year.

10.3 Evolving Church Team, Aging to Sage-ing Update — Emily MacDonald

- a) Emily circulated a report from the **Evolving Church Team (ECT)**, summarizing recent work in cooperation with the North Park Community Association. This team speaks to Goal#1 in our Strategic Plan "to foster transformation and innovation rooted in our progressive Christian faith." We participated in July in the North Park Neighbourhood Multicultural Festival. Our plans for the fall have not been determined yet, but ideas include the following: 1. Coffee and Conversation, maybe with a facilitated conversation, such as "How do you conceive of God". 2. Hold a service for families and friends of people who have died from a toxic drug 3. Hold a Repair Café—free fixing of electronics, clothing, jewelry, etc. 4. Participate in another Multicultural Festival in October. 5. Christmas gifts for the children in the Hamper program.
The Team holds its meetings on the first Wednesday of the month in the DMR at 10:00 am to noon and welcomes you to join us at any time.
- b) Sarah Murray, **Coordinator for North Park Neighbourhood Association**, has been in her CE wing office since June, and staff are finding her to be very cooperative and agreeable to have on our site. It's working out well. And her presence signifies that we are looking more outward towards the community.
- c) Part 3 of our **Aging to Sage-ing** courses is coming up October 6 – November 10. This program fits into our strategic plan as a form of leadership development. Those who complete the third stage will be encouraged to sit alongside our facilitators in new Aging to Sage-ing groups, the experience of which will generalize to leading other church groups.

10.4 Communications — Edeana Malcolm

Edeana pointed out that any team or individual who is organizing a church event, should send the information to David Bray, so that it can be advertised on the church website. Opportunities are missed when people don't share the information about their event. If you are at an event, please take a picture and send it to David and to Joan Mason, as photos can be part of congregational news.

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11. Old Business – All

11.1 Larry to update Board bulletin board in concourse. Requests individual photos be sent to him.
Minutes have been deposited in Minutes envelope on the board.

11.3 Edeana to reorganize Strategic Plan on Drobox, to make it more coherent. Yet to be undertaken.

11.4 Ross to archive Board minutes from 2018-2022 in Drobox, to the church's Internal Server. Done by Ross Breckon and Liane Clark.

11.5 Ross to explore security measures. Ongoing discussion with Bruce Davies and Jan Drent, after Bruce comes back from his summer holidays.

11.6 Shelagh to work with Irene Baddeley, Shirley Chatfield, Allan Saunders, in creating a list of people who might have skills that we are seeking. Yet to be undertaken.

12. New Business – None.

13. Actions To Be Taken from Decisions Made at This Board Meeting –

13.1 Any Board member may help Ross and Cheryl prepare next year's budget. Input welcome.

13.2 Finance & Administration Committee is to consider developing appeal for congregants to make Christmas gift donation to the church.

13.3 Larry to forward *Overview of Future Search Group* to David Bray and Joan Mason, for the website and for the fall newsletter.

13.4 If you are at a congregational event, remember to take a picture and send it to David Bray and Joan Mason, as it may be useful for congregational news and advertising.

14. Next Board Meeting – September 11, 2022 at 12:30 pm after church. There will also be a regular Board meeting on Wednesday, September 21 at 3:00 pm via Zoom.

15. Closing Blessing – Celtic blessing given by Shelagh MacKinnon.

16. Adjourned by the chair at 5:04 pm.

Edeana Malcolm, Chair

Larry Scott, Secretary

APPENDIX 1 FOLLOWS.

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APPENDIX 1: Overview of Future Search Group (August 18, 2022)

A - Our Goal

The Future Search Group (FSG) is tasked by the Board with considering the possible options for First Met United Church to revitalize and carry on its ministry for the next five years and beyond. We believe that six options arise from our analysis of three congregational discussion groups, held on June 14, 16 and 21 of this year.

The FSG is to do the analysis of the options available, assess the pros and cons of each one, and make recommendation to the congregation that will empower its members to choose a path to follow for the next five years. Not all options are equally viable or acceptable, but we have worked through six options as follows, before seeking feedback and additional input from the Board and from the congregation. Our goal is to analyze the six options in greater detail than the whole congregation might wish to undertake. These options implicitly require of us a clarifying of the congregation's mission. We will also make some recommendations as to which option(s) would be wisest to pursue, and why. But in the end, the congregation will make a collective decision about its future, at a congregational meeting in the fall.

B - Background: Why are we doing this work?

To cover the expenses associated with maintaining a large, old building complex, we rely on a diminishing number of givers, an income stream from rentals, and transfers of interest income from the First Met Foundation. Church attendance is much smaller after COVID, our demographic is of an elderly congregation, the expense of maintenance and operating for a large building complex remains the same, and the Foundation income will grow smaller as we increasingly cut into interest and capital to cover deficits. During the past decade we have looked at redevelopment of our site, latterly with the help of Pacific Mountain Region of The United Church; unfortunately, these efforts have not produced positive results. The congregation still has people, property, financial support from the Foundation, and a desire to secure a lasting ministry in downtown Victoria. But now would be the time to revitalize and clarify which option(s) to follow for the future, while we are still able to make meaningful choices; otherwise, we will continue on a path that ends up in a closure, due to depleted resources both human and financial.

C - The Options

1. Maintenance (Status Quo) Option

- Do what we do now, drawing on Foundation income, seeking rental income from tenants, gradually or rapidly depleting resources, delaying all but essential building repairs.

2. Revitalize In-Place Option

- Revitalize mission at present location – find income stream, use best principles.
- Four of the six options (2,3,4, 5) will require some form of revitalization for the future viability of First Met. The difference is in the form and place of the revitalization.

3. Right-Size by Buying New Building Option

- Buy a building in a different location – smaller, more modern, in an accessible neighbourhood, in good repair to be the congregational home base. Sell existing buildings or rent them, and use sale proceeds or rental income, to buy a smaller building elsewhere in Victoria. A smaller facility would be less expensive to operate.

4. Right-Size by Renting New Building Option

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- Rent a smaller facility rather than purchase it. Sell or rent existing buildings and use the proceeds or rent income to rent a smaller facility.

5. Amalgamation Option

- **Standard Amalgamation** or merger would take place with another equal and compatible United church community of faith that would have both congregations bring all their resources to create a larger and stronger new community of faith.
- **Absorption:** A weaker congregation unites with a stronger congregation, which “takes over” First Met resources and makes sure its members are cared for.
- **Visionary Merger:** First Met seeks to become part of a new United Church entity that is the main United Church presence in Victoria, rather than have several separate congregations that are struggling.

6. Create a Legacy Charity

- Purposefully wind down the operation of the First Met congregation and to use the remaining financial resources of First Met to create a new charitable foundation dedicated to a legacy, such as a house for refugees, an outreach of Our Place, or other justice cause in keeping with First Met’s mission to Victoria.

D – Evaluation and Consultation

An Executive Summary and a full version of the Future Search Group Report (about 58 pages) will provide a much fuller explanation of each option in September, along with supporting financial and administrative detail, demographic information about the congregation and Victoria, as well as evaluation of the pros and cons of each option. To aid in the evaluation of each option, the Future Search Committee has employed what is called the **SWOT** tool, which takes into account: **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats.

The Board of the congregation has received this overview of the Future Search Group’s work, at its monthly meeting on August 18. An executive summary of the report and the full report (58 pages) are still being finalized and will be presented at a special meeting of the Board on September 11. Shortly thereafter, there would be a distribution of the executive summary and full report (on request) to the congregation, and then a hosting of an informational congregational meeting in late September. Following that meeting, and other small group discussions, congregation members will be invited to give their preference about each of the six options, in a survey that is both online and in print copy. After the Board collects this congregational input and reviews it at its October 19 monthly meeting, the Board would then present a recommendation to a congregational meeting for a vote, likely called for October 23, so that work can begin thereafter on a path to First Met’s future.

Larry Scott for the Future Search Group