

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR MINISTRY – *STEPS IN FAITH*

Moving from Conversation to Action

Steps in Faith is a new way of being in the life of Knox United Church through which the Congregation will continue to be transformed while being open to Spirit guidance in discerning an ongoing lively ministry for this faith community.

Our Vision, Mission and Values have guided these *Steps in Faith*. They were developed during two years of dialogue, listening, spiritual reflection and guidance. Finding open space for ongoing spiritual reflection and guidance needs to be balanced with action. We need to be open to change, to be hospitable and to see where the Spirit takes us.

Five New Directions surfaced as the priority for Knox in 2013/2014. These were:

- Worship
- Music
- Exploring Faith
- Wisdom and Aging
- Being a Good Neighbour

In January 2014, Knox held four Sunday Forums after Worship to gather congregational input that would enable discernment teams to formulate specific objectives for future action. The priorities emerging from the Forums have been reviewed as a whole and, in this document, grouped into logical categories to facilitate integration, coordination and action.

Throughout the Forum discussions, and over the past 2 years, recurring and overriding themes emerged:

- Priority setting and decision-making must take into account the Vision, Mission and Values of the congregation.
- There is an appetite for change.
- The diversity of the surrounding community and Knox congregation will be a significant consideration in all our future planning.
- Currently 60% of our Congregation is over 60 years of age. We are committed to considering the specific needs of the over-60 age group as we move forward.
- Collaboration, sharing, and building on our own strengths, and those of the faith communities in our neighbourhood, is highly desirable and should be encouraged. None of us has the resources to be all things to all people.
- The new property development provides Knox with exciting opportunities. These should be seized, integrated and coordinated within the life and work of the church.
- The Congregation appreciates the conversational model of “Forums” after Worship. These should be expanded and continued on at least a monthly basis. We will provide a light lunch at cost.
- Social media are key to communication and supporting a vital faith community. We will be attentive to the advantage of using term-limited working groups for task related work rather than permanent teams or committees
- The coordination of these new directions is the responsibility of the Board.
- It is essential that we put in place evaluation processes that give us reliable feedback on the changes we are implementing.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING SPECIFIC AREAS OF MINISTRY

A. WORSHIP AND MUSIC

1. To **immediately** establish a *working group* to review and make recommendations for different approaches to music, within the next 6 months and prior to the hiring another musician to permanently replace the organist who is retiring. Such recommendations would not exclude ongoing changes to music direction over time.

Questions for consideration:

- a. What changes to our music offerings will enhance worship and / increase participation in worship?
 - b. What types of additional musicians would provide Knox with an open and flexible approach?
2. To establish a *working group* to review, over a 2-year period, worship opportunities at Knox. During this period different approaches should be researched, piloted and evaluated. This review to include:
 - a. Sunday Worship including:
 - i. Format/style of Sunday Worship including the consideration of a different approach to worship at least once a month.
 - ii. Increased participation of all members of the Congregation, especially the youth, in all services
 - iii. Increased participation of the congregation in music offerings
 - iv. Prayer, silence and meditation as a feature of worship
 - b. Alternative times and format of worship including a consideration of:
 - i. Those who would benefit from a different approach, including families, students, shift workers, and many others
 - ii. Alternatives that have worked in other settings
 - c. Ways to celebrate and advertise more of the church's high festival days

B. ACCESSIBILITY - A WAY TO THE HOLY - PHYSICAL SPACE

Immediately establish *a working group* to meet as required, under the aegis of the Building Committee, to develop conceptual plans for the design of the interior and exterior sacred space at Knox and ensure that these conceptual plans are considered in the final development plans.

Where appropriate, to recommend and implement physical changes.

Members of the working group to include representatives of the Worship Team, Community Programs and Community Development, Facilities Management, and appropriate others within the Congregation with specific expertise to address the issues under discussion.

The working group will:

1. Look at ways in which the Sanctuary can be rearranged altered to ensure:
 - a. That all members of the congregation can participate in all aspects of worship if they wish to do so.
 - b. That the space allows for different types of Worship &/or Sanctuary use

Questions for consideration:

- i. What changes in technology will enhance worship? What is needed to affect those changes?
 - ii. What realignment of seating - including the removal of some or all pews, will allow for different approaches to worship and other Sanctuary uses?
 - iii. What reconfiguration of the space between the front row of pews and the chancel area will increase participation in worship?
 - iv. How can the lectern be made accessible to physically challenged worship leaders and speakers?
 - v. How can the height of the lectern be made to accommodate all heights and members with disabilities who wish to participate?
 - vi. Would replacing the pulpit and lectern to more sleek, contemporary, movable styles enhance connections between the preacher, readers and congregants?
 - vii. Where and how could coffee and other beverages be served in the Sanctuary?
 - viii. Should the lighting in the Sanctuary be modified?
2. Establish and implement a consistent signage protocol for Knox:
 - a. To provide appropriate signage for:
 - i. The identification of Knox Sanctuary and the Knox Chapel
 - ii. The marking of the Balaclava wheel chair entrance and the West Transept entrance

3. Make the East and West Transepts and Chapel more accessible and inviting
4. Review all outdoor space to support worship, contemplation, and community building.
 - a. The following are to be considered:
 - i. The re-design of all exterior spaces including landscaping
 - ii. A street friendly and welcoming presentation of Knox church
 - iii. A Labyrinth with appropriate landscaping
 - iv. Benches for contemplation by the Memorial Garden
 - v. Outside Lighting

C. EXPLORING FAITH

1. Grandparents have a significant role to play in passing the story of faith to the children of a younger generation.
 - a. Develop an intentional program – with accessible resources – to support grandparents in their desire to pass on the story of faith in a way that connects with the lives of young people today
2. Continue to have study groups led by the minister or lay people including:
 - a. Bible Study
 - b. Topics of interest to a faith community
3. Provide opportunities to learn more about other faiths
4. Spiritual Friendship to be a formative practice as we move forward.

Spiritual friendship is an intentional relationship between two or more people in which the practice of holy listening is key. It draws on the same practices as spiritual accompaniment, but does not require such rigorous training. This is not the same as pastoral care, although it might have some of the same results. In support of this practice, we will offer a series of “preparation” sessions for people who would like to develop the skills of spiritual friendship

5. Consider the language we use to communicate to ensure that it is appropriate and understandable to all including the younger generation and those with little or no church background

D. WISDOM AND AGING

The Knox community consists of a diverse group of people searching for meaning in their lives. We desire to learn from each other - sharing our knowledge, experiences and wisdom while having fun. We wish to provide opportunities to learn from people of all ages, especially our children and grandchildren, as well as people of other cultures and faiths.

Many of us are retired, but those of us who are older feel we still have value and have gained wisdom from our many different lifetime experiences, cultural backgrounds and family situations. We want to continue growing in wisdom and “eldership” by getting to know each other and ourselves in deep, meaningful ways.

We recognize the value of our faith stories and other experiences and seek to celebrate each other’s lives by helping members of all ages share stories through writing and story telling.

We recognize that some other cultures, such as those of the First Nations, have traditions of eldership from which we have much to learn.

In developing and supporting an elder culture we will:

1. Create opportunities to discuss important faith-based, social justice issues and to follow through with actions, not just words
2. Initiate this spring a seven session book study on the book “A Time to Live: Seven Tasks of Creative Aging” by Robert Raines.
3. Create opportunities for members of all ages to share their stories, either orally or written.
 - a. Suggest specific topics in the bulletin.
 - b. Consider publishing stories in the bulletin, on a weekly or monthly basis, and compile them into our own “Knox Book of Wisdom”
4. Provide opportunities for midlife and other senior adults to learn first hand from young people about websites, Facebook and other social media. Consider making this a paid opportunity
5. Make connections with the First Nations/Musqueam community to learn about “eldership”. Contact First Nations leaders within the United Church about how to go about this with sensitivity and deep respect.

E. FORUMS

In the January 2014 Forums we realized how critical it is to us to be able to gather, in small groups, to talk intimately about what matters most to us, particularly in areas of spirituality, faith and life awareness.

We will continue to offer monthly Forums after Worship using a combination of small group conversation (especially in triads) and large group reflection as a way of encouraging this consideration of “What Matters Most”

We will use forums as one method to strengthen our faith, build relationships with neighbours and tenants, learn more about other faiths and recognize Community and Mission Programs or achievements as well as potential opportunities.

We will:

- a. Consider inviting outside facilitators to plan and implement this ongoing dialogue of faith
- b. Establish a schedule
- c. Invite neighbours and tenants when relevant and appropriate

Many topics were suggested:

- Spirituality and spiritual practice
- Communication skills*
- Evangelism as proselytizing versus evangelism as strong beliefs*
- Justice issues*
- The path of Wisdom and the shaping of elders
- Keeping a sense of wonder
- Talking to family members about death, illness, downsizing; combating loneliness*
- Conflict resolution*
- Environmental issues* (**see Truth Events, Holy Currencies, Eric Law*)

F. BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOUR AND CARING FOR OUR KNOX COMMUNITY

1. Build Relationships

- a. Transform our landlord/tenant relationships to those of neighbours and partners
 - i. By looking for areas of mutual interest
 - ii. By expressing a desire for ongoing communication and open invitation
 - iii. By developing ongoing ways to keep groups informed
 - iv. By searching out opportunities for groups to share their talents and gifts with the Knox community and neighbourhood (i.e. the karate club could do demonstrations, the brownies share with Knox in supporting First United &/or community lunch, the Acting Up group could perform at Tea Time or Fund Raisers, etc.)

- b. Change our habits.
 - i. Allow coffee in sanctuary as one way of facilitating the building of relationships with informal hospitality

- c. Continue to collaborate and support activities with local churches building on each other's strengths.
 - i. Reaffirm the Westside Churches Initiative and give leadership in deepening these relationships between congregations
 - ii. Collaborate on joint worship services, study sessions and Seniors Working Group
 - iii. Open an active exploration of new relationships with churches outside the Westside Churches Initiative
 - iv. Ensure effective communication of these activities within the Knox Community

- d. Start a walking group immediately
 1. Have someone to coordinate activity, promote the walks and disseminate schedule

2. Increase our visibility and hold an open house

- a. Use effective communication strategies to promote Knox's activities to our neighbours and others
 - i. Establish protocols for protecting sensitive information while being able to communicate effectively on the internet and via social media
- b. Host an **Open House** for our neighbours in Fall 2014 to:
 - i. Learn about our new building
 - ii. Dialogue about concerns related to traffic and parking related to the new building during and after construction
 - iii. See the Sanctuary and property
 - iv. Learn about our activities.

3. Be a spiritual space

- a. Review feasibility of restarting Spiritual Spa in the fall of 2014

This is a unique activity, which addresses our mission of experiencing the Holy, and offers our neighbours ways to do so in today's secular society. In addition it builds relationships, provides outlets for the lonely and increases our visibility.

4. Support our neighbours and the lonely

- a. Review ways in which we can support new neighbours such as immigrants and students thereby reaching out to a broader range of people in our neighbourhood. Consider:
 - i. Teaching English as a Second Language (West Point Grey does this)
 - ii. "Forums" open to the neighbourhood in addition to Knox folk
 - iii. Coffeehouse or coffee morning or another function like "Tea Time Talk"
 - iv. Provision of contemplative spaces inside and outside.
 - v. Consider an evening event for students or young people far from home or people who work during the day
- b. Expand *Community Lunch* in line with our Vision and Values to include increased advocacy services in conjunction with what is now provided by Presbytery. Explore the opportunities that could be created for growing some of our own food or accessing local growers, and work with local schools to consider the community lunch program as an opportunity for service and leadership development for youth.
- c. Continue to support our older members by inviting them to *Tea Time Talk* on a monthly basis. Working with schools to encourage service and leadership development for youth.

5. Re-establish a Membership/Hosting/Hospitality Committee

- a. To provide a warm and sustained welcome to all newcomers and members of the congregation
- b. To ensure that information about Knox and the United Church is readily accessible in the Narthex and Fellowship Centre
- c. To maintain a database of visitors and new attendees, including those attending worship, and regular congregational members noting their particular needs, interests, competences and skills
- d. To seek ways to involve new members when they appear ready for challenges and leadership in the life and work of Knox.
- e. To discuss with our newest members what might be helpful to them

6. Continue to provide resources and support for pastoral care

SUPPORT SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE NEW DIRECTIONS

COMMUNICATIONS

Place a priority on allocating resources, developing and maintaining effective communication tools and strategies to support the work of Knox United Church to:

- a. Effectively communicate with Knox's members - of all ages
- b. With the leadership of a facilitator, Knox will create a behavioral/communication covenant for healthy, respectful communication.
- c. Develop and maintain appropriate social media tools
- d. Promote Knox's work and activities to the neighbours and our tenants
- e. Encourage participation in all events and activities by the Congregation and neighbours when appropriate
- f. Present a welcoming face to the community
- g. Find, develop, and maintain professional-looking and appropriate presentation material/print media in the Narthex and Fellowship Centre which promotes and supports the Vision, programs, activities of Knox and the United Church of Canada
- h. Evaluate whether the return on investment is effective in achieving Knox's Vision
- i. Provide appropriate information in the common languages found in our local community
- j. Plan for a paid communications coordinator