***Stage Three Archaeological Assessment:***

Many of you will know by now, that there has been extensive excavating going on at the church site for the past eight weeks in order to complete Stage Three of the Archaeological Assessment, a requirement needed prior to the issuance of permits. Stage Three is when a consultant archaeologist determines, evaluates and documents any cultural heritage value of a site through measurements, maps, drawings and photographs and to remove artifacts before construction begins.

As with many churches of the 1800’s, it was commonplace to have burial sites surrounding church buildings and we knew that our site had been the site of burials from the inception of the church in 1818 until the last registered burial in 1869. In 1888, the Aurora Methodist Church Board of Trustees, petitioned to obtain authority to level or cause to be leveled off the said burial ground. It was our understanding that any remains had been moved to the Aurora Cemetery with the approval of Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario. Although we did feel we may find some remains, we have been surprised as to how many had been left intact. Once we impacted the site, it became our duty to respectfully and dutifully exhume any existing untouched remains and re-inter them at a registered site. We want to assure you that the task is being carried out with the upmost respect and detail with full consent and direction from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sports, Archaeology Programs Unit. To date, the remains of 11 have been removed and we anticipate more to follow from areas identified as potential monuments. To date, the whole site has not been excavated. With winter settling in, we will have to complete the sections excavated and impacted to date and then resume the search in the spring. With this comes both costs and timing issues that impact our future, an extensive unexpected cost to the Aurora United Church.

***Appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB):***

A neighbour has appealed our development to the Ontario Municipal Board, appealing the decision of the Town of Aurora Council that adopted the Official Plan Amendment to support the redevelopment of the site.

The basis for the appeal are,

1. It does not meet the test of good planning as required
2. It fails to comply the newly adopted (2010) Official Plan Amendment initiated by the Town of Aurora which incorporates the Aurora Promenade Concept Plan that established an urban design strategy for the surrounding neighborhood.
3. It offends the adopted existing height limits, streetscape requirements, and does not fit within the existing neighborhood.
4. Council refused to allow at least three area residents to speak at the July 11th Council meeting.
5. It is inconsistent with the “Provincial Policy Statement”.

With that, the OMB is in the process of reviewing the file and will determine if a pre-hearing or hearing is required and we hope it will be scheduled for January or February, 2018. A prehearing determines who will be identified as parties and participants, after which, a date for mediation will be set. Mediation could take 5 or more days and its success is dependent upon the willingness of both parties to agree and be reasonable. If mediation is successful, we will avoid a full hearing, but if unsuccessful, a hearing will then be scheduled and an OMB member will be assigned to our file. The length of the hearing is determined by legal counsel and the OMB member.

***Bell Canada Easement:***

A meeting was held on Thursday October 26, at Bell Canada in Newmarket regarding the easement across the back of our property, granted to them in 1989. They shocked us with a cost of $1,300,000.00 to move the lines and the timing to do so which is unacceptable. This again is where we are lucky to be partnering with Southbound Developments as they discussed options and will be working closely with Bell to rectify the problem and come up with a reasonable solution.

We want to assure you that we are moving full steam ahead and Southbound Developments are still positive about moving forward. We are planning to have the demolition permits shortly and hoping to have the houses removed by the end of November.

Despite the many bumps in the road, the EDGE Property Committee continue to work on the plans for our new building. Members of the congregation will be consulted in a timely manner for input when required to bring the plans to fruition.

**Please know that the EDGE Property Committee will continue to keep the congregation informed on a regular basis as new information is received regarding Stage Three Archaeological Assessment, Appeal to the OMB and the Bell Canada Easement.**