

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)

Members & Friends of Christ Church Gabriola,

You've been hearing bits and pieces over the past several months about our visioning process, beginning with the AGM in March. At the meeting we reflected on what a tremendous accomplishment it was to become one congregation in shared ministry. We celebrated how we emerged from that season with a beautifully functioning congregation that has become one!

Because there was so much to do during the amalgamation, there was not time for a full congregational process in discerning the mission and vision of the congregation. Practically speaking, the amalgamation was about coming together. This next season is about discerning our call from God. We could continue on without a clear direction forward, but if we believe God called us together, and if we believe God continues to call us forward, as disciples, it is important for us to discern and be intentional about following God's lead.

The Visioning Team has over the past several months taken on the challenging task of leading the congregation in a process of Appreciative Inquiry (a process designed to assist the congregation in identifying - and answering - our call from God by focusing on our strengths, as well as our sources of joy, energy, and hope). The process includes a preparatory period of prayer and identifying data on the congregation, for the purpose of painting a picture of who we are. Specifically the process asks us to 1. Remember our history; 2. Learn each other's stories; and 3. Identify our connections with the wider community. This bit has been challenging because we *just* did much of this with the amalgamation! So, how do we identify data points and paint a picture of who we are without dragging the congregation through things we've already done?

The Visioning Leadership Team has responded in the following way:

1. History – the histories of St. Martin of Tours and Gabriola United are well documented in annual reports, written histories by members of the congregations, historical records, etc. I took it upon myself to read these documents and pull out themes and relevant information.
2. Learning Each Other's Stories – We are a small congregation and many of us know each other's stories because we are connected within and outside of the congregation . . . and some have known each other for decades. We also gathered in small groups in the winter of 2018, right after I was called to CCG. The notes from those gatherings and subsequent conversations I've had with newer members of our congregation provide information on our stories. There is also relevant information about the congregation in the 2018 CCG Ministry Profile and the Shared Ministry Agreement.
3. Identifying Our Connections with the Wider Community: The map exercise was suggested by the Appreciative Inquiry process, giving us a visual representation of some of the connections within and outside of the congregation. The Visioning Team thanks you for your participation, acknowledges imperfections in both the map and the exercise, and hopes to glean from it all we can.

By the end of September we will publish our findings in a report by email. We will also post copies on the church bulletin board, along with all of the public documents used to create it. We

hope you will read the report, consider it, and if you wish, offer a written response to the Visioning Team.

We are blessed this month with a 5th Sunday on September 29, and will take the opportunity to do some creative elements in worship around our visioning process.

Looking into the fall: with the preparatory work completed by the end of September, the Visioning Team will discern Appreciative Inquiry questions - designed to draw out our strengths and sources of joy, energy, and hope - for the congregation and community stakeholders. The Visioning Team will synthesize the information we receive from these questions, do some discernment, and will ultimately bring the fruit of that discernment back to the congregation.

We thank you for all of your prayers and patience as the Visioning Team has felt our way through the spring and summer, discerning and walking the path God stretches out before us. We look forward to working with you all on the next steps.

Blessings,

Rev. Karen Hollis on behalf of the Visioning Team
(Susan Brockley, Shelagh Huston, Owen McCooley & Betty Schultze)