

MINUTES – Woodlawn United Church Council June 29th, 2020

CALL TO ORDER: Council Co-Chair Peter Woods called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring WUC follows the recommendations of our federal, provincial and municipal leadership to refrain from public gatherings and meetings, chair Peter coordinated a video conference so we may continue the work of Woodlawn United Church.

In Attendance via Video: Allan Eddy, Barry Zwicker, Bob Watt, Brian Moors, Cathy Kay, Dennis Dean, Helen Dixon, Kathy Dean, Kerri Graham, Peter Woods, Rev Mary Lynne Whyte, Paul Whyte,
Community of Faith Profile Team – Don Trider, Faye Gunter, Jamie Masse, Jerry Jackson, Maarten Kramers, Stephanie Bennett.

WELCOME: Peter welcomed all to the meeting.

OPENING PRAYER: Peter led the meeting in an opening prayer.

AGENDA: - Peter reminded the meeting that this was an 'one agenda' meeting; to discuss and arrive at a response to the recommendation made by Rev. Dr. Linda Yates, Region 15 liaison to Woodlawn, that the CoFP Team be disbanded and an intentional interim minister be called to Woodlawn United for a three year period.

DISCUSSION – Peter began the discussion by encouraging everyone to engage in the dialogue but it was Council who was charged with providing a response to Rev. Yates recommendation and it would be Council who ultimately would have the responsibility to arrive at the response. Peter indicated that if the response was to enter into a 'call' for a three-year interim minister his preference would be that the congregation be consulted before responding to the Region.

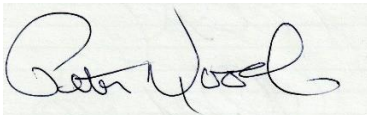
A period of comments, questions, explanations followed. Barry indicated the CoFP Team would hopefully be in a position to report by the end of September.

It was agreed, by consensus, the Council of Woodlawn United recommends to Region 15 that the CoFP Team remain in tact, that the CoFP Team is requested to present it's draft report by the end of September 2020, that Woodlawn Council will modify it's interim minister job description to include interpersonal and conflict resolution skills, and if those skills are not present in any available interim period minister that Woodlawn would hire a minister for the interim period until a 'call' is made to complement the mission and ministry at Woodlawn United, and that council would immediately seek and hire a professional to assist us in a self examination process.

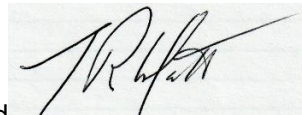
Peter, as co-chair agreed to present the option agreed upon to Rev. David Hewitt, Region 15.

ADJOURNMENT – Peter adjourned the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

CLOSING PRAYER – Peter offered a closing prayer of 'thanks'.



Peter Woods: Co-Chair of Council



Submitted
 J Robert Watt - Secretary, WUC Council

Woodlawn Report

by Rev. Dr. Linda Yates

Region 15 Representative to the Woodlawn Community of Faith Profile Committee June 11, 2020

Introduction

I was appointed as the Region 15 Representative to the Woodlawn Community of Faith Profile Committee in the early summer of 2019. I have worked over the last year with them through a series of meetings and projects. I have read numerous informative documents that were generated before and during the work we have done together, including a previous consultation with Rev. Dr. Ross Bartlett (see attachment). I have had a number of conversations with the members of their Ministry team throughout the year. I have read through all of the material generated by the excellent congregational consultation facilitated by the diligent, hard-working CoF profile team. After prayerful consideration, it has become clear that Woodlawn United Church needs to enter into a three-year period of Intentional Interim Ministry.

Background

Woodlawn United Church is in the unusual position of having two of their current three-person Ministry team leave at the end of June, 2020. There is an ordained Minister, Rev. Mary Lynne Whyte, whose responsibilities are mostly around Pastoral Care, but these duties have expanded of late to include varying aspects of worship and administration. She is an Appointment and has recently had her term renewed until the end of 2021. The departure of Personnel represents an opportunity for revisioning the mission and goals of Woodlawn as well as the congregations' role in the surrounding community. The role of the CoF Profile Committee often seemed nebulous in its connection to the Board and was expansive in its own perceived responsibilities. For example, there was a suggestion by the Committee Chair that the committee take responsibility for designing and facilitating an exciting and experimental new form of worship. The committee decided it was not within their scope. The Committee did a fine piece of consultative work which saw 100 congregants offer up their opinions and hopes for Woodlawn. The Committee should be proud of this (see attachment). It is a foundational piece of work that has led to some important realizations about the need for critical strategic planning.

Woodlawn hovers between a Pastoral Sized congregation (50-150 worshipping on a Sunday), and a program-sized congregation (150-250 worshipping on a Sunday). This is the most anxiety provoking size to be. Transitioning to either a larger or smaller category is fraught with anxiety. The congregation is aware many of the stalwart workers are aging and there does not seem to be a wholesale willingness to replace them in their current work. Likewise, attendance has dropped off to some extent (pre-Covid). This has caused some anxiety in the congregation regarding financial sustainability which resulted in the creation of a Sustainability Committee, which seems to have a great deal of influence within the congregation. The Sustainability Committee was well represented on the Community of Faith Profile Committee. For all of the anxiety expressed about the ability to meet future financial obligations, Woodlawn seems to consistently meet their budget. There is a vibrant younger family and young adult component at Woodlawn who feel empowered to lead and are very interested in experimenting with worship and community service. New people are coming and are eager to express their faith and commit to it in new ways within the Woodlawn setting. This is seen as a positive by all generations.

Throughout the meetings there has been a great deal of discussion about the role of clergy at Woodlawn. The question of accountability has come up at almost every meeting. There have been some documents produced, extensive emails between myself and the CoF Profile Committee Chair, emails between the CoF Committee Chair and the Board, emails between the Board and the Regional Minister about this topic. Yet serious problems persist in the unusual confusion and mistrust concerning the role of Ministry Personnel in congregational life and polity.

Finally, as with all congregations at this time, the new Covid reality has placed additional pressures on the congregation, while also opening up ideas for new ways to worship and be together.

Intentional Interim Minister, the Rev. Dr. Ross Bartlett advises:

Interim Ministry is recommended for a variety of circumstances in the life of a congregation. Interim ministers have special training to assist communities of faith address the following situations:

- * *when there has been a long pastorate (even when successful) to allow folk to disengage from the previous relationship and enter into a new one;*
- * *when there has been a season of serious conflict where there needs to be healing and practicing new ways of relating;*
- * *when a congregation wants to clarify its next steps in mission before seeking to call new ministry personnel;*
- * *when a congregation needs to enter into a significant change in its governance structure to respond to current opportunities;*
- * *after a merger or amalgamation*

In company with the community of faith, specific and measurable goals are identified and the steps to accomplish them clarified. With those goals clarified, the congregation and the Interim Minister identifies which ministry tasks are done by the clergy and which will be taken up by the congregation. Regular reporting and communication are key parts of the process.

Departure of Staff

Rev. Phillip Kennedy has been at Woodlawn for well over ten years. When clergy have been in a pastorate for ten years or more bonds develop, patterns are created and congregational attachment is entrenched. There is disruption with one long-serving Minister leaving, let alone two-thirds of the team. It will take a particular clergy skill set to work with a congregation as they move through this significant and profound change.

Clergy accountability and relationship with the Congregational Governance

It would appear that there has been a significant amount of conflict between the clergy in Woodlawn and the governance structure. Clergy were criticized for not sticking to their job description (for example the Youth Minister decided to supervise office staff) and also for sticking to their position description. Frustration was expressed about clergy being unwilling to do something they were asked to do because it did not fit within their description. When position descriptions were being floated by the CoF Profile team, there was a resistance to committing to any kind of position description in the interest of being creative and “out of the box.” Many discussions were had about accountability of clergy. I wrote a document about the covenantal relationship between a CoF and their clergy which touched on this as well as the question of accountability (see attached). What in their history has led to this mistrust of clergy? How can Woodlawn governance move toward a healthier relationship with their clergy?

Governance

In my time with the CoF Profile committee, there has been discussion about future governance reform. It appears that there has been some governance reform already. The roles and responsibilities of committees do not seem clear. For example, the Sustainability Committee seems to have some official and unofficial influence over many of Woodlawn’s decisions. There would seem to be some disconnect between the CoF Profile committee and the Board, having had some communication between the Board and the CoF Profile committee about next steps in process and some big philosophical questions about the role of Ministry personnel and the relationship of the United Church of Canada, in general, (see below). I have offered several times to appear before the Board to answer questions. Questions persist, but I have not been invited to the board to work with them to find answers. I have been copied on answers to emails directed to the Region 15 Minister that would have been easily answered by myself.

Governance is important. Even blue-sky and outside-the-box visioning requires a process and an accounting to the congregation through some kind of recognized reporting structure. In these new times, a flexible structure is needed

in which creativity can happen, but there exists enough accountability to ensure financial, ethical and legal obligations are met. Some in Woodlawn have expressed an interest in creating such a structure. Others do not see the necessity.

Relationship with the United Church of Canada

Throughout my time on the CoF Profile Committee expressions of frustration and mistrust of the United Church of Canada as a structure and denominational entity have been expressed. While this is not unusual in the era since the UCC restructuring, my sense is that this skepticism and mistrust preceded the new Model. The source of this needs to be explored for the benefit of all. A new relationship needs to be encouraged.

New Expressions of Faith

An exciting and positive development at Woodlawn has been the presence of an empowered laity who envision new ways of living out Christ's mission. They are usually under 45 and have no baggage associated with previous conflicts. There is an expressed desire for these new visions and explorations to be realized. In most congregations, this can result in conflict between the "established" congregation and the fresh explorers. A skilled Interim Minister would be able to help empower these lay-leaders while helping the congregation work through any possible conflict.

The Need for a Strategic Plan

It became clear after the congregational consultation; the development of a long-term strategy is required in order for Woodlawn to thrive. Fortunately, Woodlawn has many talented, faithful people who can realize this. There have been many discussions about the need for a strategic plan. One member provided a possible template for a path forward. I include it as an attachment (*Woodlawn Next Steps*) to demonstrate the variety of discussions at the CoF Profile Committee about possible future scenarios. There seemed to be recognition in the consultation that, with so many possibilities and challenges before them, a cogent plan is needed that provides adaptive solutions, as opposed to technical solutions. What has become clear from all the consultations is that Woodlawn requires a particular kind of Ministry for a three-year period to help them with develop their plan based on a foundation of spirituality and a sense of mission. *The kind of clergy they require before and while the plan is being completed may be very different than the clergy team they require as a result of the plan.*

Recommendations

- 1) All of the above factors indicate a community in flux, confusion and with a multiplicity of possible paths forward. It would be unethical to place a team of Ministers in Woodlawn if the issues above remain unaddressed, particularly those related to the mistrust of clergy. It is a recipe for disappointment and possible relational damage. Instead, the placement of a qualified Intentional Interim Minister who has strong leadership skills is critical.
- 2) Rev. Mary Lynne Whyte should be retained throughout the 3 years. She is well respected by the congregation and is a calm, caring presence. She should be offered the option to apply for one of whatever positions are created as a result of the plan developed in the Interim.
- 3) I can assist with the development of an Interim Ministry Proposal, but recommend when they engage their Intentional Interim Ministry process, they begin with a new Region 15 liaison as part of their Transition Team. The task before that liaison will be very different than the one I was presented with.
- 4) The CoF Profile team should be dissolved as the congregation gets ready to consider the creation of an Interim Ministry Proposal. A sub-committee of the congregation can be appointed at a Congregational Meeting. The task of that sub-Committee will be to create a Proposal (see Intentional Interim Ministry handbook for Boards, attached). Some members of the CoF Profile team may want to re-offer for that task.

I appreciated my journey with Woodlawn. I am hopeful because the Holy Spirit is strong within them.

In Christ's Service

Rev. Dr. Linda Yates

How should we go forward?

- Woodlawn United Church, led by the Community of Faith Profile Committee and Council, should develop a strategic plan and framework to guide the next phase of church evolution, with our new ministerial and staff team.
- The strategic plan will be full of goals and objectives for Woodlawn United Church.
- The strategic plan **cannot be** an operational plan of programs and initiatives. Programs fulfill outcomes. Outcomes fulfill objectives and goals.
- The new ministerial team will be tasked with operationalizing the strategic plan. They should be given a clear (reasonable) date to deliver an operational plan to Council and ultimately the congregation.
- The operational plan will include the proposal of pilots, programs and plans for change management, along with financial and human resource needs.
- Before we engage in a strategic plan, Woodlawn United should conduct a comprehensive audit of human, capital and programming assets. Think the annual report, but including thoughtfulness to active volunteers, volunteer bottlenecks, program uptake and more. The benefit of this audit would be three-fold:
 - o It will help future staff to get a grasp of recent history, context, and resources
 - o It will help the strategic plan process in understanding our strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.
 - o It will help to better communicate to the congregation – especially newer congregants – about church efforts and opportunities. This is both an opportunity for engagement of those new congregants, but it helps with the recruitment – if we know of opportunities that resonate with our neighbours, we have better in's to invite them
- If Woodlawn has any post secondary students in its membership, it might be an option to explore the new Canada Student Service Grant offered this summer to complete this audit.

If I was to establish a strategic plan (our goals and outcomes) without the proposed audit, these would be the pillars of my strategic plan:

- **Worship** – Continue to offer a weekly Sunday service that draws inspiration, challenges the congregation, and fosters discussion for spiritual well being. Start to explore, pilot, and ultimately entrench alternative worship approaches (ex. The Annex, Messy Church).
- **Outreach and Community** – Woodlawn is seen a leader for Social Justice in our neighbour, Dartmouth, the HRM and the rest of the province. Leadership would manifest in both the service and programs offered to the broader community. Woodlawn empowers its ministers to be champions in interfaith and demonstrates Christian leadership in the broader community.
- **Pastoral Care** – Everyone recognizes that the time and energy in Pastoral Care cannot be measured against a normal day, every minister will share the responsibilities of Pastoral Care. A member of the faith team will take on a leadership role of Pastoral Care and will be accountable to ensuring requests and obligations are met and work directly with lay support teams.
- **Youth** – Space is made for youth in worship and congregational activities. Every program and activity will ensure that there is youth and young family lens. Woodlawn United is a safe and inclusive space for all youth, inside and outside the congregation. Youth strengths are fostered so that they may contribute to both Church and Community.
- **Fellowship** – Woodlawn strives to offer a faith community that exists like family. Programs must evolve with the needs of the congregation and the talents of volunteer / lay person champions. The faith team is tasked with helping to foster lay person champions.

- **Music** – Is an essential part of worship, fellowship, and outreach for Woodlawn. The Church has many existing relationships with bands and concerts offered to the broader community currently enjoyed in the evenings. During service, our community has benefited from a strong choir program which needs to be supported. It can also grow by encouraging different experiences from both inside of the church, by encouraging youth to participate and outside the church by inviting different groups, choirs, bands, singers to preform at Woodlawn.
- **Recruitment** – Underpinning a lot the anxieties and concerns at WUC, is the aging congregation and sustainability. Therefore, all efforts must be made to encourage growth of the Church, if we do not intentionally share what is going on inside our doors no one is going to feel welcomed to join. A strategy for recruitment should be developed and employed. A targeted recruitment of young families, both in the neighbourhood and the broader community should be at the heart of this strategy.

Who would lead what?

- A lot of this question is addressed in the draft plan. I think it would need to be fleshed out, but I would like to see:

Minister One – Full Time Community and Outreach	Minister Two – Full Time Pastoral Care	Youth, Young Families and Volunteer Coordinator – Staff member – Full Time
Ministers: Responsible for Funerals, Baptisms, Marriage		
Collaboratively Responsible For: - Would be responsible for operationalization and change-management of the Strategic Plan. - One of the three will be responsible for General Administration and Council, they pick - Fellowship, Worship and Recruitment		

- Secretary full time – could be job shared ○ Does this include bookkeeping, what else is involved with this position?
- Organist / Choir Director – could be one or two persons.

What are the characteristics of who we want to be looking for?

Characteristics of the team, I would be looking for individuals presenting:

- People who is dynamic, willing to adapt and are flexible
- Strong public speaking and presentation skills
- Demonstrates self-motivation and initiative
- Joyful and willing to take risks, make mistakes
- Active listener
- Team orientated motivators
- Has project management skills, including detail orientated and organized, should be willing to give examples
- Worked with volunteers
- Conflict Management and demonstrates patience
- Reflective
- Diverse

Summary of What you told us. (Report from CoFP Team)

April 28, 2020

The Community of Faith profile Team has been holding consultation sessions since December 2019. We invited participation from you the congregation by email, announcements during service and through direct requests to all of Woodlawn's standing committees.

You answered the call! We held 14 different sessions with well over one hundred different people participating. We offered a secure email for direct input, which has been used by a few. Overall, we are very pleased with the number of people who have contributed their thoughts and ideas. This illustrates how committed the Woodlawn community is to our church and demonstrates a desire to make our church relevant and meaningful to its members and the greater community.

There were many responses to each of the questions we asked you to consider. Below is a summary of what we believe captures the majority of your comments and wishes. Here is what we have heard you say:

It is clear to the Community of Faith Committee that congregants feel very connected to existing and traditional programs, and to the staff and ministerial team. In fact we heard so many stories and anecdotes of connections, conversations, inspirations and hugs from the current team and past ones. Existing in the mix of comments are expressions of appreciation for previous Staff and also concern about the financial viability of the current Staff complement.

We also explored some of the areas in which there exists some opportunity for us to continue to fulfill God's will for our congregation, the United church and the Woodlawn community at large. What is also clear is that congregants both possess unique ideas and are open to creative programs and changes to any number of ministries from music to fellowship to youth.

We have been encouraged by our conversations and the insights we have heard, but we are also humbled that working on what the Woodlawn United Church can be in the next 5, 10 years. We acknowledge that we must keep future members of our evolving community of faith in mind as we proceed.

This report is focused on what we gathered from current members who have shared their thoughts and ideas with us. From our conversations, the following ministries in no particular order were seen as top priorities, and should be top of mind when taking our next steps:

- Pastoral Care
- Fellowship
- Music
- Outreach
- Youth

There were numerous comments focused on expanding **Pastoral Care**. It is clear from the consultations that personal ministerial relationships are an important element of spiritual well-being for many. While there was great praise for our current programs and offering there is always room to grow and some interesting ideas to build from for future leadership.

Our church revolves around the need for **Fellowship**. Next to the relationships with our Ministry Team, a relationship with fellow congregants – friends who become family – is essential to the Woodlawn experience. Many participants reflected on the need for more fellowship opportunities – and often, not just for their own age group. Activities such as Fish Chowders were mentioned as an opportunity for Fellowship, as well as a fund raiser. Couples Club is seen as a flagship program to be expanded. Home Church, arts and sharing programming and TGIT were mentioned with great love. There were references to past programs lost and missed, as well as new ideas for connecting with one another. The desire for the facilitation of intergenerational and interfamilial relationships was a sentiment that resonated with us.

The **Music Ministry** is something in which many people demonstrated great pride, while others articulated appreciation. Sharing our faith through music is important to a wide cross-section of the congregation. Some commented on the fact that the organ, traditional hymns and anthems are important to them. Others felt a diversity of music offerings, from traditional to contemporary, is an

important shift. Perhaps the most consistent sentiment shared amongst different groups, was the need to re-engage youth in Woodlawn's Music Ministry, an effort which would certainly require an intentional program and leadership to champion it.

Our congregation understands their Christian responsibility for their neighbours and the community outside of the church walls. With pride for the existing **Outreach** ministries such as the Food Bank and the DunGen, congregants believe that it is Woodlawn United Church's responsibility to advocate for social justice in Dartmouth, in Nova Scotia and around the world, and to identify meaningful and intentional contributions for the community. This was an area where many specific and creative programming ideas were shared, which must be explored by new staff leadership in the future.

Finally, it was abundantly clear that the Woodlawn congregation has a tremendous amount of pride, love and commitment to children, youth, young adults and young families; it was a sentiment repeated throughout every meeting held. Future leadership in the **Youth Ministry** will be expected to prioritize the maintenance and enhancement of close meaningful relationships with our youth and provide to them an intentional Christ Centered place for their growth and development. A desire for a strong Sunday School program, youth group, and youth choir were all mentioned on multiple occasions. These were the consistent sentiments shared. There were many more nuanced anecdotes and statements offered, however we believe they are generally reflected above.

It is with great humility and anticipation that the Community of Faith Profile Committee shares these reflections with the larger Woodlawn united community. This experience has been an uplifting one. As we read and tried to interpret the comments from our Community of Faith, we can see how much inspiration and hope for improving Woodlawn there is. There is a love for the church, the programs and the services that has been woven throughout each of the sessions and a real desire to offer more for our community.

We hope that these priorities, in balance with one another, reflect what it is you feel, and what you told us. Have we heard you correctly, or is there more we should know? We now need your feedback in order to continue our process.

During the consultation sessions a lot of folks indicated that we may need to change how we deliver our programs, services, even outreach to meet the needs of others. This is so true now that we are all experiencing the impacts of COVID 19. The virus was not rampant during our consultations but clearly we are looking at a changing NORMAL going forward. We will be considering what we have experienced and learned from this difficult time and attempting to incorporate specific recommendations in our final report that address this situation.

Given we are not holding services yet, please let us know through email or by calling one of us on the committee to share your thoughts on the above summary. We can be reached at: communityprofile@woodlawnunited.ca.

Next steps:

- 1) Once we have your responses and a level of comfort we have heard you accurately we plan to look into our existing programs and services to evaluate how well they are meeting the desired outcomes or are headed in the right direction.
- 2) As part of the strong outreach interest we have heard we will try and come up with an effective way of communicating with outside community groups. We would normally seek face to face meetings but that may not be possible in the near future.
- 3) We will be looking into new or alternative ways of achieving the interests put forward by you. This will involve understanding the impacts on all resources including staffing and of course financial impacts
- 4) Once we have all of the above organized and ready for presentation we will develop an open process to present, discuss and ultimately present specific recommendations to Council and you the Congregation.

Respectively Submitted for your review and consideration.
Your Community of Faith Profile Team

Accountability in the Pastoral Relationship

A paper for Woodlawn United Church

By Rev. Dr. Linda Yates, Liaison for Region 15

Covenant

One of the primary theological principles underlying all Judeo-Christian beliefs and practice is the idea of Covenant. A covenant is more than a contract binding people or entities. A covenant within the church is understood as a binding together of people and the Holy into a spiritual relationship. This has practical implications. A church-sanctioned marriage is a covenant, while a Justice of the Peace presided marriage is a contract. Within a church marriage, vows are made between the couple and promises are also made to God. It is understood that God also promises to hold and infuse the marriage with the Holy Spirit. Like-wise Baptism is a covenant. When a baby is baptised, the parents make declarations of their faith and promises to God. God is understood to work with and commit to the faith-filled spiritual life of the child in its relationship with the parents and church community. The church community makes vows and promises to the child and to God. The circle of vows is a covenant.

For thousands of years, God has called forth individuals who are tested and confirmed by the collective Communities of Faith as being fit and properly trained for particular service in ministry. The training has evolved over the years, as various societies have, but the concept that God calls for people to serve God and God's people and sets apart such people to be able to do so has not changed. The care and inspiring of the vulnerable is a duty so fraught with power issues and the needed theological knowledge so broad, the requirement for training has almost always been long, multi-year processes. The process differs in some ways between denominations, but the core actions of recognition are essentially the same. Once an educated and trained recognized person is chosen, a covenant is made between the ministry personnel, the Community served and the adjudicatory body (in the UCC case, this is the Region). The Spirit is called upon to bless and empower the sanctioned person, the community they serve and the covenantal promises they have made together. This is the circle of the covenant.

The 2019 version of the UCC Pastoral Relations Handbook begins with the following statement:

A covenant is now defined as follows (The Manual, 2019, section I.1):

A "covenant" is between God, the ministry personnel, the community of faith or other ministry, and the wider United Church as represented by the regional council. The covenant may include other parties that are integral to living out the gospel in community as God calls us.

*A covenant with a community of faith is established by call or appointment. It **creates** a pastoral relationship and is governed by [pastoral relations policies].*

Why does this matter? Creating positions descriptions and understanding the relationship between Ministry Personnel and CoF hinges on the covenantal relationship. The participants bind themselves to each other spiritually, which is something that does not happen in other organizations. It profoundly alters the understanding of the relationship. Having said that, Ministry Personnel also are to be treated with the basic Human Rights that all citizens enjoy, including labour law etc.

Accountability

Throughout our meetings together there have been a couple of incidents that are frequently cited when discussions about accountability within the broad framework of "open" visioning occur. First, it has often been cited that sometime Staff will respond with "that's not in my job description" when being asked to do something by someone, presumably (hopefully) someone in authority. Also, there is the occurrence of Staff taking on responsibilities not deemed to be theirs, such as supervision of office staff, when this was not in their job description. It is helpful that these are raised because they can be examined to tease apart assumptions and accountability.

- 1) In the first instance, it would seem that someone had expectations that Staff would do some work that Staff felt was not in their job description. In this case, both parties expect Staff will do certain things that are included in their broad range of duties, but the two disagree about what that is. What is absent from this discussion, on both sides of this encounter, is the assumption that Staff have no job description or expectations. Every member of every CoF in every time, everywhere have assumptions about what Staff should and should not do. They are implicit to being human. We have expectations. Not having a job description does not remove these assumptions. Not having a job description may in fact, amplify confusion, animosity and discord in the congregation. Therefore, a good job description puts some recognizable, reasonable, congregationally-based-need-identified expectations and boundaries around employee roles. These can be referred to by both congregation members and Staff.
- 2) In the second instance, due to some kind of defacto gap, the Youth Minister took responsibility for supervising office staff. This was apparently done without consultation of Board and M&P. Board members and others objected that Ministry Personnel cannot take it upon themselves to acquire new supervisory duties. This is a correct observation. However, those expectations highlight the same point as above. There are clearly position descriptions considered to have been violated. In this case, rather than the Staff member saying "this is not in my job description," they have said, "this will be in my job description from here on." In this case the Board would be quite correct to ask M&P to require Staff to stay within the confines of their role description. If M&P found there was reason to challenge this, they would need to bring it to the board as it does substantially change the Staff person's roles and responsibilities. In this case, the position description helps the Board define a management and supervision problem that is not being served by the current configuration of Staff.

In both cases, objections were raised by Board members about perceived violations of role parameters. A CoF cannot say on one hand, that they want loose job descriptions so Staff can be asked to do whatever seems pertinent and not be bound by their position description and be "flexible," but then also object when Staff, on their own in addition to their job description, take up responsibilities that seem to need doing for the good of the organization. It cannot be both ways, as both sets of assumptions are mutually exclusive.

In a well-functioning CoF, Staff are considered to be valuable guides, leaders and empowerers. Staff do not seek to control the Board or congregation but rather support the direction and goals and hopes of the Board and, in particular, draw the Board's attention to the lead of the Holy Spirit. The Board's responsibility is to represent and lead with the guidance of the congregation. If one wants to know where the power really resides in the CoF, it is useful to remember that the Congregational Meeting is the ultimate decision-maker. They can over-rule the Board. The Minister is under the discipline and oversight of the Region. A congregation cannot discipline a Minister. The Minister is also the one of the Region 15 representatives, therefore at least one designated Ministry Personnel member must be present for a quorum at meetings. This is so Personnel can offer guidance and also continuity from and for the UCC. The M&P committee acts as the liaison between the CoF and the Ministry Personnel. The M&P can ask Staff for goals and report these to the Board. An annual review of goals is a good practice for M&P. At all times, the salaries, vacation schedules and Continuing Education plans are available to the Boards. At the Annual Meeting, Staff salaries must be available upon request and increases in salary approved as part of the annual budget. This creates accountability and trust among the congregation.

Position Descriptions

In all organizations and businesses, job descriptions and expectations are essential to productivity and trust. This is so that personnel can understand what is expected of them and helps them to achieve the organization's goals. Position descriptions must be specific enough to provide boundaries for both Staff and CoF but loose enough to allow appropriate creativity and flexibility. An understanding of position priorities is important too. Clearly, someone calling the Lead Minister to demand they visit their sick cousin who just had an appendectomy when the minister must go to a board meeting is inappropriate. (This happens so often, it is shocking). A job description helps with this in that it gives priorities to each position. This, might, for example, be appropriate for the Pastoral Care Minister on duty that

day to carry out. If Woodlawn is in a time of dreaming, visioning and trying new things this needs to be in the position description along with time expectations. As well, if dreaming about establishing “out- of-the-box” type of church, then this expectation should be described and accounted for in terms of time. If you want to work toward a Ministry Team approach, this needs to be named, and the “team” aspect given hours and support. As with all new things which take years to develop, if you do your job correctly and Woodlawn experiences good, radical, growth-building change, you will also need to have a plan for receiving criticism of the Minister(s).

It is also important to note that position descriptions can dramatically change, if circumstances require it. These need to follow appropriate processes, however. Remember that in the rest of the world “constructive dismissal” is a compensable violation. This is where the role expectation has changed so dramatically, without the permission of the employee, that they are no longer able to do their job very well. Working in partnership with the Minister as positions change can be very fruitful. I was called to St. John’s United Church in Halifax as their Principle Ordained Minister, but soon found that a huge re-visioning process was needed. I moved into a role of helping them facilitate that, then finally into a role in which an Incorporated Ministry was envisioned for a big Assisted Living Development. For the latter, I very quickly had to learn about construction, Seniors Assisted Living etc....At each stage, I successfully worked with M&P and the Board to discuss the changing Ministry role and what was expected. Regular communication and trust is key.

Summary

When a covenant is made between Ministry Personnel and the CoF, the Ministry Personnel is under the discipline of the Region. The Minister is bound by their position description, which can change as time goes on, with the approval and input of M&P, the Board and the Congregation in their varying capacities. If the position description changes dramatically, or in terms of number of hours, permission is needed from Region 15. All of these bodies are accountable to and in relationship with God.
