

MINUTES – Woodlawn United Church Council September 22nd, 2020

CALL TO ORDER: Council Co-Chair Peter Woods called the meeting to order at 7:00 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, co-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, Jim Allen, Kathy Dean, Kerri Graham, Keith Musselman, Rev Mary Lynne Whyte, Paul Whyte, Peter Woods.

CoFP TEAM IN ATTENDANCE – Fay Gunter, Jamie Masse, Jerry Jackson, Maarten Kramers, Stephanie Bennett

GUEST – Fred Evans

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

AGENDA – One item agenda meeting called by the chair to receive and respond to the email from Rev. David Hewitt dated September 16th. (Copy attached)

WELCOME: Peter welcomed all to the meeting and indicated that David Hewitt's email had been dated September 16th, the date of the last WUC Council meeting but was time stamped 4:59pm and received too late to be included in the discussions that evening.

DISCUSSION – Peter began by stating that David Hewitt's email was in response to our letter of September 9th wherein Woodlawn acknowledged receipt of the motion passed by the Region 15 Pastoral Relations Committee where it was stated; *"The following motion was passed by the Region 15 Pastoral Relations Committee within their authority and on behalf of the Region*

Moved that Region 15 approve the development of an Interim Ministry at Woodlawn United Church, Dartmouth. Development shall include:

- a. *The current Community of Faith profile preparation team shall develop the Interim Ministry plan in cooperation with Region 15 and then disband.*
- b. *Linda Yates will continue as Region 15 Liaison with Woodlawn until the plan for Interim Ministry is finalized, and receives Region 15 approval.*
- c. *The requirements for Interim Ministry as expressed in the Manual and applicable handbooks of The United Church of Canada will be followed, including the establishment of a Transition Team to work with the Interim Minister during the Interim Ministry.*
- d. *The Appointment of Mary Lynne Whyte will continue for the duration of the Interim Ministry. Mary Lynne will be considered eligible to apply for any permanent positions that may emerge following the Interim Ministry.*

Peter continued to note that within the letter of September 9th to the Region Woodlawn also asked for a meeting with the Region to review the materials that would be presented to the Woodlawn congregation in support of the Regions motion for Woodlawn United to undertake Interim Ministry; and failing that, that the Region advise direction as to how and when to call a congregational meeting at which the Region would communicate its directive to the congregation and seek the leadership to pursue and implement.

Peter noted that Rev. Hewitt's reply did not address the request from Woodlawn. Peter then opened the meeting to discussion.

Barry informed the meeting that the CoFP Team, as promised, had completed its draft report and it was ready for presentation to the WUC Council. He also noted that each and every member of the CoFP Team had indicated they were unwilling to work with Rev. Linda Yates in any capacity; i.e. as liaison to the CoFP

Approved

Minutes of Special Council Meeting – September 22nd, 2020

Team in further development of its profile and plan for Woodlawn going forth, or as directed by the Region 15 Pastoral Relations motion to develop the Interim Ministry plan with Linda Yates continuing as liaison. Barry noted that all members of the CoFP Team indicated that all trust and faith in Linda Yates had been irreparably destroyed.

Barry informed the meeting that he had reached out to Janet Sollows, Region President if it was appropriate to request an agenda item to discuss the developments between Woodlawn Council and the Pastoral Relations Committee at the upcoming Regional Meeting. Janet's suggestion was that Barry speak with the Executive Minister, Rev. Faith March-MacCuish. Barry indicated he has placed calls to the Executive Minister and was waiting her return call,

Peter informed the meeting that representatives from Woodlawn M&P had been in discussion with David Hewitt about supply ministry for Woodlawn. Helen (M&P) indicated their intention was to ensure assistance for Mary Lynne was available until such time as there was a resolution to the differences between the Region and Woodlawn. It was noted that while the action of M&P was well intended and appreciated, it was not deemed appropriate for David Hewitt to involve himself in the development of a job description, have it presented to the Region Pastoral Relations Committee, approved and several candidates identified all without the knowledge, involvement or approval of the Council of Woodlawn United.

Kathy and Dennis spoke passionately of their hurt and their disappointment in the behaviour and action of representatives of the Region. Kathy read a letter of resignation from Dennis and herself, effective immediately, as Co-Chair of Council and Co-Chair of the Trustees and respectively left the meeting.

The discussion that followed consisted of expressions of hurt, loss of respect for the Region representatives, the lack of empathy, unwillingness of the Region to offer an explanation for the Yates report. Mary Lynne called for calmness and understanding among everyone and offered a moment of prayer.

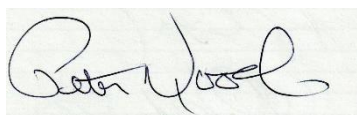
It was noted that of the five addressees to the Woodlawn letter of September 9th, (Rev. David Hewitt, Rev. Tom Woods, Rev. Faith March-MacCuish, Janet Sollows and Right Rev Richard Bolt) not one responded in any way to what was an obvious plea for help from Woodlawn. It was also noted that all had been copied on David Hewitt's September 16th reply and again, no one reached out to Woodlawn.

There was agreement that Council should, one last time, make a plea to the Region for clarification and justification of Linda Yates assessment that Woodlawn United was a church in crisis and seek help in reconciling what has become major differences between the Region and Woodlawn. It was agreed that Barry would draft the letter, have it circulated to council for their approval and confirmation and that it be emailed asap, preferably on September 23rd.

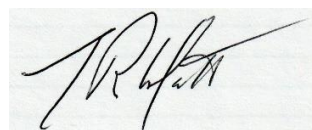
Barry indicated he would again attempt to contact Rev. Faith March-MacCuish to inquire if she supported the action by the Region Pastoral Relations Committee before the letter was sent to David Hewitt.

Peter indicated his intention to resign as co-chair of council and asked Rev. Mary Lynne to close the meeting with prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m..



Peter Woods – Co-Chair of Council



Submitted by: J Robert Watt – Secretary, WUC Council

ATTACHMENTS

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Hewitt, David** <DHewitt@[united-church.ca](mailto:DHewitt@united-church.ca)>

Date: Wed, Sep 16, 2020 at 4:59 PM

Subject: RE: Response to Motion of Region 15 Pastoral Relations Committee

To: Peter Woods <commonkore@[gmail.com](mailto:commonkore@gmail.com)>

Cc: Tom Woods <tomwoods188@gmail.com>, March-MacCuish, Faith <FMacCuish@[united-church.ca](mailto:FMacCuish@united-church.ca)>, Janet Sollows <janetsollows@gmail.com>, Moderator <moderator@united-church.ca>

Dear Peter,

We acknowledge receipt of the September 9, 2020 letter from you on behalf of the Woodlawn Council. Given that Region 15 has approved the development of an Interim Ministry plan for Woodlawn, what is requested in your letter is exactly what needs to happen:

1. The Woodlawn Profile team needs to engage an exploration of the value and benefits of Interim Ministry, articulate goals for the Interim Ministry and develop the plan for Interim Ministry. Linda Yates and I will provide Regional support for this work, which should begin promptly. I am aware of several experienced ministry personnel who are currently available and might be eligible to serve as Interim Ministers in this area. It would be a shame to miss the opportunity to consider them for this position.
2. The Interim Ministry plan will be presented to the Woodlawn Council.
3. The Interim Ministry plan will be presented to the Woodlawn congregation.
4. The Interim Ministry plan will be presented to Region 15 Pastoral Relations Committee.

I look forward to working closely with Woodlawn through this important work.

In Peace,
Dave

David Hewitt

Regional Minister, Region 15

The United Church of Canada

1-800-268-3781 ext. 6154

The United Church of Canada acknowledges that its buildings and ministries, from coast to coast to coast, are on traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples.

Our vital, innovative, and healing ministries are supported by generous Mission & Service donations.

September 22, 2020

To Our Woodlawn Family,

It is with deepest regret and profound sorrow that Dennis & I are submitting our resignation from Co-Chair of Council and Co-Chair of Trustees of Woodlawn United Church. The past six months have been particularly difficult months for everyone as we all were faced with a Global Pandemic but none of this compares to manner in which our home church Woodlawn United has been exposed to the unprecedented measures that Region 15 has blindsided this congregation with while we are in the midst of extra ordinary times and are in the process of developing a Community of Faith Profile Review. The report submitted by Linda Yates- Liaison for Region 15 caught every single person of Council and Community of Faith Profile Team by surprise and was not supported with substantial evidence other than to say after discussions with our former Ministerial Team that she determined Woodlawn to be a church in Crisis without giving specific reasons for this conclusion. Even though Council has made three attempts to discuss, reconcile and determine what information has brought Linda Yates and Region 15 to this conclusion, we feel WUC is being “bullied” into accepting “Intentional Interim Ministry”. The manner in which Woodlawn has been spoken to is not one of care and

Approved

Minutes of Special Council Meeting – September 22nd, 2020

compassion but of inflammatory accusations which are unsupported. Linda Yates has not attended any of Congregational consultation sessions of CofFPT, she claimed she was refused an invitation to meet with Council of which we are not aware of her even asking and it is unthinkable that a person with such inability to dialogue other than with forceful attitude will be the person who will lead the development of Interim Ministry for our Woodlawn United Church Family.

Myself as Co-chair of Council and Dennis as Co-Chair or Trustees have always taken pride in helping Woodlawn be the thriving, vibrant church who cares about its congregation and the community it serves. There is nothing that any one person does here at Woodlawn but the entire family as a whole. So many volunteers give of their time, talent and treasure to further God's kingdom here at Woodlawn without asking anything in return. The lack of respect, empathy and transparency has caused such feelings of hurt, despair and has undermined the spirit and the will of the volunteer leadership that is so critical to the Governing Body, CofFPT and the congregation of Woodlawn United. In this day and age, how can this happen? There is so many things happening in the world outside of the church which can impact the survival of religion and our churches but when these kind of disagreements happen within the a religious organization, we need to look deep into our own destiny. We are contributing to our own destruction?? This entire process has shaken our faith to the core and given us reason to question the credibility of Ministers in leadership roles who are not capable of demonstrating What Jesus would do. If we believed for one moment that this would be the actions of Jesus, we would definitely be leaving the church completely.

In our view, there is a more definite need within the United Church of Canada to work with their Communities of Faith to find ways to bring people into the church rather than drive them away. The lack of evidence of reconciliation and healing is not apparent and our concerns and our frustrations have not even been acknowledged and in fact they have been ignored. To further add to the conflict, we have been reminded of the authority of Region 15 and its actions so really we are being given ultimatums and to make matters worse we are being directed to accept the leadership of Linda Yates who by all accounts is at the very root of this problem. How unchristian like is this process! The recent reply from Region 15, did not even acknowledge any of our concerns and then to add more insult to injury, David Hewitt has once again used his authority to deem it appropriate to reply, respond and approve a Job Descriptions from members of M&P who did not seek the approval nor the direction from the Governing Body and to suggest possible ministers we might consider. How can we respect and trust Linda Yates and David Hewitt and Region 15 or the United Church of Canada for that matter? Under those conditions, we are not prepared to provide leadership for Woodlawn United Church.

For all of these reasons and for many more which we feel inappropriate and too many to name at this time, Dennis & I are resigning from all our responsibilities but for the immediate will remain part of the family of Woodlawn United at least for the short term but will not consider ourselves members of the United Church of Canada.

Thank you, Woodlawn, for the opportunity to be a part of this congregation's ministry. You are a special family which we respect, love and care about very much. We wish we could say the same thing for the United Church of Canada.

Sincerely,

Kathy Dean – Co-Chair of Council

Dennis Dean – Co-Chair of Trustees