

MINUTES – Woodlawn United Church Council September 29th, 2020

CALL TO ORDER: Rev. Mary Lynne Whyte called the meeting to order at 7:05 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, Peter Woods coordinated a video conference so we may continue the work of Woodlawn United Church.

IN ATTENDANCE VIA VIDEO: Barry Zwicker, Bob Watt, Brian Moors, Cathy Kay, Helen Dixon, Jim Allen, Kelly MacNeil, Kerri Graham, Keith Musselman, Rev Mary Lynne Whyte, Paul Whyte.

GUESTS – Rev. David Hewitt, Rev. Tom Woods, Fay Gunter, Fred Evans, Nell Mallett, Ralph Sams

OPENING PRAYER: Mary Lynne led the meeting in an opening prayer.

WELCOME: Mary Lynne welcomed all to the meeting and introduced David Hewitt and Tom Woods. Mary Lynne then read 'Procedures for Holding a Meeting and Decision Making' from the appendices of the United Church Manual.

AGENDA – Mary Lynne requested that the letter sent to the congregation dated September 28th be included under Correspondence and that an item 'Next Steps' be added to the Order of Business as Item #3 and Round Table moved to Item #4. The agenda was agreed upon as modified.

TIME OF ADJOURNMENT – It was agreed that 9:00 p.m. be the hour of adjournment.

CORRESPONDENCE – By consensus it was agreed that the four items of correspondence be accepted for information. Letters of resignation from Kathy and Dennis Dean and Peter Woods were addressed to the congregation through the Council. Allan Eddy's letter of resignation was addressed to the Council. The letter dated September 28th and circulated to the congregation had gained Council approval by email consensus.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

1) Voting Procedure: Consensus versus Majority – Mary Lynne began the discussion by stating that the practice of Woodlawn Council to reach a decision-making conclusion had been by 'consensus'. Mary Lynne read the process where by decision-making is achieved by majority vote and noted that the current model of consensus was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve resulting in either stalemate or a feeling that motions/actions were moving ahead without full agreement of everyone. **Brain moved, Helen seconded that decision making within council going forward be by consensus and if/when consensus is not achieved the decision be made by majority vote. The motion was approved by consensus.** David noted for clarification that the Rules of Order used by the United Church abstentions are not called for and if someone wanted their abstention recorded, they would have to request same.

2) Council Co-chair Vacancies – Mary Lynne opened the topic by reading 'Meeting Procedures – The Chair' from the appendices of the United Church Manual. Mary Lynne noted that both council co-chair positions were vacant and suggested 'rotating chair persons' as a possible solution. Responding to a question David suggested that council may fill the chair vacancy either from within or outside council. Bob suggested two individuals, currently not on, but who have had experience with council, that could be approached. Brain suggested rotating chairs be selected by last name alphabetically, with the right to refuse. There being no objection, the process suggested by Brian was agreed to by consensus. There was also agreement that the two individuals suggested be approached to determine their interest. Mary Lynne called for volunteers, in alphabetic order, to chair future meetings. Helen agreed to chair the October meeting/s. Cathy agreed to chair the November meeting/s. It was agreed by

consensus that Bob contact the two individuals suggested as protentional 'acting council chair' until the next congregational meeting.

- 3) Next Steps:** Paul suggested that along with the regular Old Business and Business Arising, for the October meeting that there are two new items to be addressed; the CoFP Team Report and the Appeal of the decision made by the Region Pastoral Relations Committee. Brian suggested that the CoFP Team report to a special, one agenda, council meeting. It was agreed that the CoFP Team present its report to council during a special one item agenda meeting on October 20th, 2020. Helen agreed she would be available to chair and arrange the agenda for the Special October 20th Meeting and the regular meeting October 21st. It was suggested that the Appeal Process be included in the agenda for the October 21st meeting. Barry inquired from David if there was a 'time line' for an appeal. David indicated he was not aware but agreed to research and advise our council of his findings. When asked how long an 'appeal' may take, David indicated it would be up to the General Council Judicial Committee and he was not in a position to know what appeals were currently being adjudicated.
- 4) Round Table –** David expressed his thanks for being invited to the meeting in part because the email communication has been less than satisfactory and hopefully, we could find a way to move forward. David indicated the conversation was around interim ministry and that interim ministry is a normal practice when a change of a long-term minister happens. He indicated, 1) that there is often objection to the consideration for interim ministry; 2) that the level of angst from Woodlawn when interim ministry was offered is surprising; 3) there is a process to address objection; 4) the process, according to the handbook, is to discuss the objection with the CoFP Team; 5) the CoFP Team are the ones to shape the plan for interim ministry. David indicated that Linda Yates is the liaison person, but that the Pastoral Relations Committee, because of the CoFP Team expressed desire not to work with Linda has instructed that David be part of the process as well. In response Barry stated that interim ministry was not offered, it was dictated and that the departure of a long-term minister was only one of the reasons given. Barry also stated that the suggestion that placing a minister at Woodlawn would make them sick and potentially mentally ill was the one that raised most questions and that repeated requests for an explanation was not forthcoming from the Region. Brian suggested it was the aim of council to become 'unstuck', but he as well was concerned and confused that the Yates report came to council at the same time as to the CoFP Team, that the Linda Yates recommended the CoFP Team be disbanded and that she had resigned, then the Region informed the same CoFP Team, which Linda recommended be disbanded to meet with Linda, who had resigned. Brian also suggested that maybe we could recognize that all have made mistakes, offer apologies and move forward; at the same time, it is evident that the relationship with Linda Yates is fractured and hopefully the Region could, in wisdom and in caring, assign someone other than Dr. Yates to Woodlawn. David agreed there had been missteps and there were times when things could have been done differently and that is part of his reason for attending this evening. He reiterated the steps that have taken place to date and that the next step was a meeting with the CoFP Team; that the process to be followed is that the CoFP Team would develop goals for the interim minister, the goals would be presented to Council, then to the congregation before being presented to the region. Paul asked David if an interim minister would be dedicated to problem solving or would he/she also be involved in moving forward the goals set forth in the CoFP Team's report. David answered that the interim minister would work within the position description developed and work with the congregation to facilitate and implement the interim goals and therefore the job description presented by council would have to be adjusted to include interim ministry responsibilities. He also stated that the new handbooks emphasized that any previous exploratory work done by the congregation is to be considered, upheld and carried forward. David also stated he knew of four individuals, though not all have completed the studies required to be interim ministers, who could possibly be interested in serving at Woodlawn. Brian asked if a church could proceed with an appeal and at the same time move forward with a transition team. David indicated he thought it depended upon what was the basis of the appeal and it was best to work with Faith March-MacCuish to shape the appeal itself. David stated that he could not understand the reluctance of the CoFP Team to meet and discuss the issues. Barry reminded David that four of Woodlawn's leaders had resigned because the region would not

answer the questions poised to them. Mary Lynne asked if someone other than Linda Yates could be assigned to meet with the CoFP Team and David said that region was not going to introduce someone else into the conversation and it would be an opportunity for Linda to hear how her report affected the Team. Barry stated, and David agreed, that if Linda were to state only that she stood by her report and offer no other explanations, then a meeting would be a waste of time. Barry offered to check with the CoFP Team if they were willing to meet with David and Linda to explore unanswered questions and asked David for times when he was available. Brian thanked every one for coming to an agreement to move forward and that council would welcome hearing from the CoFP Team what they had learned.

Bob asked David that, since M&P has apparently worked with the region on a job description, that the job description has been approved by Pastoral Relations, how soon can we move forward on recruiting ministerial help for Mary Lynne. David replied that the Part Time Support Ministry Position suggested by M&P would be a stop gap until the interim ministry position is determined. David said that the position has been approved by Pastoral Relations and can be posted, that he has spoken with Helen and Cathy about possible individuals to approach and if council approves, Helen and Cathy can start right away.

Barry and Paul suggested council should see the position description. Helen indicated she and Cathy were working on something to present to council and maybe it could be put on the Oct. 21st agenda but they would provide the job description next week. Brian indicated pulpit supply has been arranged for every second Sunday, excepting one, until the end of the year and in the meantime the job description is now live on the 'Hub'. Mary Lynne expressed her appreciation for the efforts in getting supply help and that she would notify council if she found herself in the position where she was overwhelmed with work.

Paul as chair of Communications expressed his appreciation for the cooperation on the weekend in developing the letter to the congregation and that the cooperation evident tonight was a sign of optimism.

Mary Lynne expressed thanks to David, Tom and all the other guests for attending meeting this evening.

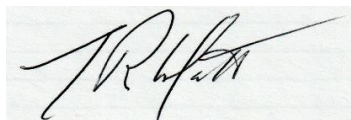
CLOSING PRAYER – Rev Mary Lynne offered a closing Prayer.

ADJOURNMENT – Rev. Mary Lynne adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

NEXT MEETING – Special Meeting – October 20th, 2020
Regular Meeting – October 21st, 2020

Rev. Mary Lynne Whyte

Chair of Meeting – Rev. Mary Lynne Whyte



Submitted by – J. Robert Watt

Woodlawn United Church Council – AGENDA

Special Council Meeting

September 29th, 2020

7 PM – ZOOM Video Call

Call to Order – Rev. Mary Lynne Whyte

Opening Prayer – Rev. Mary Lynne

Welcome and Introductions -

Approval of Agenda -

Time of Adjournment –

Correspondence – 1) Resignation Letter from Kathy Dean
2) Resignation Letter from Peter Woods
3) Resignation Letter from Allan Eddy
4) Congregation Letter September 28, 2020

Order of Business: 1) Voting procedure: Consensus versus Majority
2) Council Co-Chair Vacancies
3) Next Steps
4) Round Table – Time permitting

Closing Prayer – Rev. Mary Lynne

Adjourn

CORRESPONDENCE

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 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 under minded 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

Formal Letter of Resignation

September 22, 2020

Mr. Bob Watt, Secretary
Council of Woodlawn United Church

Dear Bob:

It is with profound and sincere regret that I tender my resignation as co-chair of Council for Woodlawn United Church. In accordance with the United Church Manual, 2019 which states:

B.7.3.6 Vacancies

The governing body is responsible for informing the pastoral charge when there are vacancies on the governing body. The governing body may fill the vacancy until the pastoral charge elects a replacement

My decision to resign has arisen from the events of the past three months during which I, and my other co-chair, Kathy Dean, have tried with sincerity and love of Woodlawn United Church, to provide leadership in dealing with representatives of Region 15. Specifically, this is in respect to representatives of Region 15's refusal to work with our Governing Body (Council) to find a respectful and common process to secure much needed Ministerial leadership for our congregation.

With the expected and proper departure of two, of our staff of three, full time Ministers on June 30th, 2020 we have spent countless and fruitless time and energy to secure interim Ministry to work with our remaining Minister, Rev. Mary Lynne Whyte in the provision of Ministerial oversight for our congregation. This was indeed necessary to enable the work of an already in progress formal Community of Faith Profile Review. This review was set in place by our Congregation at a duly held meeting on June 23rd, 2019. With approval from Region 15 to begin this process a Committee of 7 congregants was elected by the congregation during this meeting and Region 15 Minister, Rev. David Hewitt advised that Rev. Dr. Linda Yates had been appointed as the Region 15 Liaison to work with this committee to carry out their work. As Rev. Yates was not going to be available until September due to vacations etc., the work of the committee was delayed until early in September. The Community of Faith Profile Team (CoFPT) worked diligently to carry out their work which included face to face meetings with over 100 members of our congregation to ensure that the dreams and wishes of the congregation would be captured in the course of their work. Even though we were all caught completely off guard by a worldwide pandemic of Covid-19, this committee continued their work to prepare a report and recommendations for presentation to our Governing Body, our congregation and ultimately on to the Pastoral Relations Committee of Region 15 for final approval. The final approved report and recommendations would set out a set of goals and objectives together with a recommended staffing compliment to guide the Ministry and work of Woodlawn United Church for the next 10 years and beyond as appropriate. In an unexpected report and recommendation sent to both the CoFPT and Council on June 11th, 2020 by Rev. Yates, she unilaterally and without consultation and/or discussion with the members of the CoFPT, recommended that their work come to an end, that they work with her to develop a job description for an Intentional Interim Minister, complete with goals and objectives for the period of Intentional Interim Ministry, and then be disbanded. Her recommendation for Intentional Interim

Ministry was for a 3-year period and would be supported by a new “Transition Team” to be appointed by the Governing Body. This new Transition Team would include two representatives from Region 15. At the end of three years a plan which had been developed by this Transition Team and Interim Minister, essentially replicating the work of the CoFPT, would be approved and used to guide the Ministry and work of Woodlawn United Church into the future.

Due to the nature by which this report and recommendation came to Council as well as the CoFPT as a total surprise, together we attempted on several occasions to seek clarification for the reasons and motivation of Rev. Yates along with the Pastoral Relations Committee of Region 15 for this course of action. No supporting reasons for this action were conveyed to us despite several attempts to seek consultation with every level of the governance of not only Region 15 but indeed up to and including the Moderator of the United Church of Canada. Our continued efforts in this regard were discounted and we were not even extended the courtesy of a requested meeting to enable us to receive a clear understanding of why this action was being imposed on us. All the while we were dealing with the day to day matters of keeping our congregation supported including our one remaining staff person who was working steadily to respond to our spiritual needs.

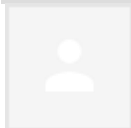
Our final attempt to secure a conversation with Region 15 representatives by formal correspondence on September 9th, 2020 was casually brushed aside by an email from Rev. David Hewitt on September 16th, 2020. Rev Hewitt’s email, essentially restated their direction to us previously and made no mention of responding to two specific questions asked of them in our letter. The callus nature and complete absence of any acknowledgement of the pain and anguish that their actions had and continued to cause within both our CoFPT and the majority of members of Council has caused me to seriously reflect on why I would want to continue to work with such an organization from whom I expect much much better. While my faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, remains intact, my respect and confidence in the United Church of Canada, and more specifically, that of Region 15 and its leadership has all but disappeared. I, and my wife Maureen have nothing but love and admiration for our Woodlawn United Church family. We do not carry membership nor attend to Woodlawn United Church to have our feelings and our hearts handled in this manner. This has inflicted a pain on both Maureen and I in such a way that we feel compelled to definitely step away from any leadership role we may have at Woodlawn United Church, hence this formal resignation. For now, at least, we will continue to support our Woodlawn United Church family. We pray that God’s grace and love everlasting will show us a path to heal our wounds in the days, weeks, and months ahead. Ongoing evidence of the type of behavior and lack of love and compassion from the leadership of the broader governance of the United Church of Canada which has been our experience of late, will definitely impact on our continued relationship with this organization.

In Peace and love to all of my colleagues and indeed all of our Woodlawn United Church family, I place my name to this letter of resignation.

Peter Woods

Thank you!

Inbox

**Allan Eddy**12:44 PM (Sep
25) Reply

to me

Bob I want to take a moment to say thank you for the tremendous job you do as Secretary to Council and to acknowledge all the work you did for so many years as the Envelope Secretary! My participation at Woodlawn has been a result of the inspiration you and others have provided through your deep commitment to Faith and the incredible example of selfless contribution to the life and Ministry of Woodlawn.

Bob just to ensure there is no ambiguity, please accept this as my formal resignation from Council and the Stewardship committee of Council. I do this with heavy heart as I feel a sense of letting you and others down by stepping back. Despite that, I do believe that for Woodlawn to move on as it must, it is important that I not be an impediment to that forward movement. Given my current personal struggle with the larger governance of the United Church of Canada, I know at this time I am incapable of contributing in a positive manner. Please know that I wish nothing but the best for WUC and I will hold all of you who carry the church forward in my prayers.

All the best

Allan Eddy

Cell :

Sent from my iPhone



WOODLAWN UNITED CHURCH

1532 Woodlawn Road, Dartmouth, NS B2W 2S1

September 28, 2020

Dear Woodlawn Church Family,

It is with great regret that Council accepts the resignations of co-chairs Kathy Dean and Peter Woods as well as co-chair of Trustees Dennis Dean and Council Stewardship rep Allan Eddy. As you know Woodlawn has been seeking to determine a path forward following the departure of two of our ministerial staff in the spring. Our Community of Faith Profile Team (COFPT) has been working diligently for the last year to this effect. On June 11th, Rev Dr. Linda Yates (our Region 15 COFPT liaison) sent a letter to Region 15 and Woodlawn indicating her position that Woodlawn exhibits a number of criteria that point to the need for Intentional Interim Ministry. Among other things this would mean that the work of the COFPT would stop in order to determine the job description and goals for the Intentional Interim Minister. One of the goals could be to review the work of the COFPT to date.

Through a number of communications extending to this past week, Woodlawn has been unable to get any satisfactory details from Region 15 about the nature and extent of the issues that caused Rev Yates to make this determination. According to the United Church Resource on Intentional Interim Ministry (all bolded text):

When Is Interim Ministry Necessary?

Interim ministry assists with transitions of all kinds. Some of the primary ones are:

- **disagreements and tension that are blocking a community of faith's life and effectiveness**
- **serious trauma, such as sexual or financial misconduct**
- **the departure of a long-tenured (10+ years) minister or the death of a minister**
- **inadequate finances for the community of faith's life and mission**
- **major changes in the demographics of the community of faith or its surrounding community**
- **the desire of a community of faith to rediscover its identity and mission or to move in a new direction in its ministry**

Interim ministry is essential for communities of faith that are in crisis. Trained ministry personnel will lead the community of faith through its feelings of anxiety, struggle, pain, and grief to a place of healing and readiness for the next stages.

Interim ministry is also of benefit to any community of faith that wishes to manage change intentionally for a stronger, healthier ministry and future.

As a result, there has been much time, effort and anguish spent over the last several months trying to work this out. There is frustration for some with Region 15 and plenty of hurt as well. Council regrets but understands that at this time Kathy, Peter, Dennis and Allan feel they must step back

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from leadership activities. Their efforts on behalf of Woodlawn over the past year and indeed over many, many years is acknowledged and very much appreciated!

Council continues to work on this issue so that we can eventually make use of the great work done by the COFPT. Woodlawn has a long and strong history of faith, love, mission and hope. With prayer, thought and love for one another, and openness to the Holy Spirit, we will discern our way forward to continue our mission and ministry in the name of Christ.

In Peace,

Woodlawn United Church Council

All of the council minutes that encapsulate these discussions are, as always, available on the Woodlawn United Church website under: Committees of Woodlawn, Council beginning with the June 24th, 2020 minutes.

Email: office@woodlawnunited.ca
Web: www.woodlawnunited.ca
