**Cordova Bay United Church - Working Towards the Vision in 2019**

**Minute for Mission April 7th 2019**

Good morning friends,

Last year the church council worked on developing a new Vision Statement for our congregation – a statement of what we will strive to become. The new Vision Statement, approved at the AGM of the congregation in February of this year, is:

*‘An inclusive community living out Christ’s love in the world’*

It was interesting and inspiring to work at defining our new Vision for our congregation. A lot of members worked hard on crafting the words to truly reflect our culture and our values. But now the real work starts – we must determine the route we want to take to achieve the Vision. This is the task that lies before the council for this year, and it’s a task we are approaching not without a degree of fear and trepidation. But it is a task that must be done if we are to continue to move towards our Vision – being an inclusive community living out Christ’s love in the world.

As we do this, a basic tenant of our process must be that we are open – truly open – to change. It’s not about how we position ourselves to continue with “business as usual” – neither should we expect it to be. But neither is it about wholesale change for the sake of change. Change must be driven by opportunities to faithfully pursue our goal to achieve our Vision; it must also be driven by realistic expectations as to the resources we will have at our disposal, and maximizing the impact of the use of those resources on an ongoing, sustainable basis.

We are already beginning to change – our youth ministry is an example of that. We have a strong youth ministry, but it’s different from the youth ministry which many of us were part of decades ago. It didn’t happen by accident – we made a conscious decision to devote resources to this sector, and it has worked.

We are not the only group wrestling with these issues. Our denomination – The United Church of Canada, has undertaken a reorganisation: starting this year our structure has changed – presbyteries have been done away with and we are now part of a region that includes must of British Columbia, along with parts of Alberta and the Yukon. This region, named “Pacific Mountain“, is one of a total of 16 regions nation-wide.

In the Greater Victoria area, many of our sister congregations are exploring new and sustainable ways to serve, worship, pray and witness – Cadboro Bay and St Aidians are in the trial stages of integrating their ministries and Oak Bay is planning on building an affordable housing project utilizing the equity in their property. Closer to home, we have been meeting with the other Saanich Peninsula United churches, seeking new ways to cooperate and innovate in ministry and outreach. This group’s first cooperative venture will be a benefit concert for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, featuring the music of Ron Kluismeier, which we will be hosting here at Cordova Bay on June 7th.

Our church council decided just recently to embark on a process to discern how we should respond to changes around us as we try to work towards our Vision. We are going to ask ourselves: “what do we want to look like in 10 years time, and how do we get there?”

We are going to start looking at the resources we have at our disposal, and estimate how those resources may change over the next 10 years. This includes financial resources, property resources, and people resources. We will be asking ourselves how these resources are likely to change over that 10-year period.

At the same time we will be preparing an inventory of all the things which we might characterise as “what we do” – including, for example, Worship and Corporate Prayer, Spiritual Development, Pastoral Care, Community Support, and Outreach, and we are going to determine the proportions of each of our resources which we expend on each of the “things we do”.

Then we will critically examine each “what we do” component to determine:

* 1. Does each of them lead us towards our Vision?
  2. Is the allocation of resources appropriate in terms of moving towards the Vision?

This will lead to consideration of new opportunities for the “what we do” list that may warrant a reallocation of our resources, along with new strategies that might be available to us to provide resources for “what we do” on a sustainable on-going basis, such as:

* Collaborating with other congregations
* Redevelopment of our property
* Entering into shared ministry opportunities
* Use of cluster cells (house churches) with corporate worship at a rented site

Hopefully this will all come together as we develop a sustainable, vision-centric strategy.

April, May and June will be spent gathering data and information, which is needed to make meaningful assessments of the options that might lie before us. In the fall, we will begin to consider alternate strategies for the future, and there will be adequate opportunities to solicit opinions and feedback from everyone in our spiritual community.

Are you feeling a bit overwhelmed at all this? Well, join the club, because so am I! But I take consolation from the words of one of my hero’s of the church, Bishop Oscar Romero, who was assassinated on the steps of his Cathedral in San Salvador in 1980. He wrote:

*This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capability.*

*We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.*

*We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.*

Bill Walker