

Imagining our Congregation's Future

Guiding Statements and Next Steps
Congregational Meeting, April 7, 2019

On May 27, 2018, the congregation of FBCH gathered to begin a new conversation about our church's future. Since that time, work has continued both in congregational gatherings and in smaller work groups focused on Faith Formation, Social Justice, Faith & Ecology, and Placemaking. In January of this year, the four work groups reported back to the congregation.

From that work, the Diaconate with the assistance of other Board and Committee leaders, met on March 9 to reflect upon the congregation's work and begin the process of charting a way forward. From that meeting, five *guiding statements* were composed. The hope is that these statements reflect the significant themes that arose out of the congregation's work and can be used to help the congregation begin to make concrete plans for future action.

Along with the five *guiding statements*, the Diaconate proposed next steps to help us continue living into our congregational aspirations. The list is not exhaustive and will surely change as we experiment and continue this work together.

On April 7, the congregation will gather around lunch tables to review the *guiding statements* and consider affirmation of these as a step in the process of imagining our future. If affirmed, the Diaconate further proposes to form a Coordination Team consisting of the Diaconate Executive, Chair of Board of Management, Chair of Finance Committee, Treasurer, Chair of Board of Trustees, and Chair of Property Maintenance Committee.

As you prepare for the meeting, it might be helpful to review the process that has brought us to this point:

March 2018 - Deacon Retreat

Last March, our Deacon's retreat began with a presentation about trends in emerging churches. We then worked in three groups focused on placemaking, ecology, and faith formation. Much synergy between groups was noted and a general enthusiasm for the work prompted discussion of undertaking this work as a congregation. A process of imagineering on a congregational level was soon developed by our Deacon Executive.

May 2018 - Congregational Work Session

On May 27, approximately 130 congregants gathered for a brief worship service followed by an abbreviated version of the emerging church presentation given at the Deacon's retreat. Examples were given of ways churches were responding to shifts in how people relate to communities of faith. Following the presentation, the congregation split into three areas to record thoughts and ideas related to: Placemaking (connecting to community and God), Faith & Ecological Well-Being, and Faith Formation (with emphasis given to contemplative worship and formation experiences). It was noted that a number of our younger adults were present and engaged in this work. Following the

formal work time there was a significant buzz in the hallways as people conversed and spoke hopefully about the future of our congregation. Out of the work, it was also apparent that we needed a fourth work group focused on Social Justice.

September 2018 - Congregational Reporting Session

Over the summer of 2018, steps began to be taken toward experimenting with ideas that would help us begin living into some of the thoughts shared and supported at the May congregational session. Among this work was re-imagining the office administrative position to more intentionally focus on communications and engagement with the congregation and wider community. Experiments like the Canada Day worship service that included breakfast and communion in the Assembly Room also resonated with ideas expressed at the May congregational session. Thus, the September gathering of the congregation focused on detailing some of these small steps as well as reviewing the major themes developed by the congregation in the May session. The primary goal of the September session was to recruit members of the congregation to join one of four work groups.

October - December 2018 - Work Groups

During the months of October-December, each work group met two to three times to talk in more detail about the ideas expressed by the congregation. Approximately forty individuals participated in the work group process. Through the process, each work group produced a report detailing ideas, recommendations, and possible next steps.

January 2019 - Work Group Reporting Session

On a Saturday morning in January, the congregation was invited to hear oral reports from the co-facilitators of each of the four work groups. Co-facilitators were encouraged to “think up” in their reporting—focusing on major themes and ideas without getting into logistics related to possible implementation. Following each report, the congregation was invited to ask questions. Among the approximately forty-five who attended, there appeared to be eagerness for continuing the process.

January 2019 - Congregational Annual Budget Meeting

Our 2019 Annual Budget Meeting was an important part of the congregational process to imagine its future. Both Clyde Evans, Treasurer, and David Dexter, Finance Chair, provided sobering analysis of our present financial situation and its implications over the next five years. While sobering, an optimistic note was also struck that this is a challenge we can put our collective imagination toward. In many ways, the presentation served as another reminder of how crucial the work we are engaging in and how important it is that we keep this process moving.

March 2019 - Deacon and Leadership Retreat

On March 9 the Deacons and other church leaders held a retreat at King’s University. The purpose of the retreat was to reflect on the work of the congregation over the last year, including reviewing recommendations from each Work Group, and to form out of that reflection a set of guiding statements and next steps to help the congregation chart a way forward.

Guiding Statements April 2019

We recognize that our future as a congregation depends on FBCH providing meaning in the lives of those with whom we interact (existing participants and community at large) and on financial sustainability.

1. It is a human characteristic to seek connection with the Holy within ourselves, within others, and within creation. For many at FBCH, a primary place for seeking this connection is the Sunday morning worship service. In addition, we would like to provide opportunities that encourage a multitude of avenues of spiritual exploration informed by the broad Christian tradition that meet the diverse needs of the larger community.

Next Steps:

- A. Maintain Sunday morning worship as a primary means of connection within our congregation. (ongoing)
- B. Continue the Godly Play program while exploring avenues for extending its reach.
- C. Form an open-invitation work group to develop plans for regular contemplative worship and practices that connect us to God, each other and to creation. (Group formed in May 2019, initial plans implemented by October 2019)
- D. Develop on-line resources for spiritual connection (ongoing AND concentrated efforts in early 2020)
- E. Continue to support small groups (for example, Clyde's book study and youth programming) and encourage Board of CE to nurture similar opportunities. (ongoing)

2. We are social beings who not only desire but require community to live and to thrive. We seek to deepen our connection among those who already participate in our common life. We also need to broaden our reach to connect with more of our neighbours and in doing so will better reflect the diversity of the surrounding community.

Next Steps:

- A. Support initiatives like Parent & Tot that welcome our neighbours. (ongoing)
- B. Support efforts to connect with larger community through music. (ongoing)
- C. Encourage FBCH participants to provide small group opportunities based around similar interests, studies, meals, etc. These groups could meet in homes, in the larger community, or at the church. (ongoing)
- D. Continue working as a congregation to support the work of visitation and foster a sense of community within the church. This includes developing new efforts as outlined in our 2018 Annual Report to hold a quarterly meeting for sharing information about needs among our congregation and ensuring that no one is going unnoticed among us. (ongoing)

- E. Commit ourselves to the work of sharing the FBCH story to the broader community, including expansion of our social media presence (ongoing) and experiment with new methods of reaching out into the broader community through various media. (winter 2020)
3. From our beginnings in 1827, FBCH has sought to live out the words of Micah 6:8 “Listen here, mortal: God has already made abundantly clear what ‘good’ is and what is needed from you: simply do justice, love kindness, and humbly walk with your God.” (Inclusive Bible) Building on this tradition, we seek to extend our voice and our efforts to do justice for our neighbours and for the good of all creation.
- Next Steps:
- A. Continue our active participation in social justice initiatives. (ongoing)
 - B. In order to determine social justice priorities for action and advocacy, review our past commitments and survey current participants to identify areas of greatest need and interest. (September 2019)
 - C. Form an open-invitation "Green Team" to examine our practices, and align ourselves with other Green churches and strengthen the connection between faith and ecology. (May 2019 and ongoing)
4. The financial stability of FBCH depends on the active contributions of its participants AND on developing other revenue streams that are in line with our core values.
- Next Steps:
- A. Review of rental agreements (April 2019 - Board of Management)
 - B. Begin a study of the highest and best uses of all parts of church property. (Study to begin May 2019, Goal to report to congregation by 2020 Annual Meeting - Trustees & Finance)
 - C. Communicate stewardship needs to the congregation (ongoing - Finance)
5. Honouring the freedoms at the centre of our Baptist heritage, we practice broad-based, informed decision-making that actively seeks input from all participants. Recognizing this as a core of our shared life, we also acknowledge that our current structures need adjustments to meet the needs of a changing congregation. We will develop governance structures that seek to be responsible, flexible, nimble, and fearless.
- A. Continue with current governance structure, while encouraging project-based work groups that support committee functions (ongoing)
 - B. Study governance structure to meet needs of changing congregation (2020/2021 - Diaconate and Board of Management)