

Session Chronicles Volume 1 - January 2018

*At its January 2018 meeting the Session of St. John's decided to publish a short newsletter called the **Session Chronicles** to inform the congregation of what transpired in Session that month. This recognizes of course that some matters before Session are of a confidential nature and therefore cannot be discussed outside Session. That aside, it is hoped that the congregation will find this informative and perhaps enlightening when it comes to understanding the role of Session and your Elders at St. John's.*

Session is currently made up of 12 elders elected by the congregation, plus a Clerk of Session and the Minister who moderates Session meetings. Session normally meets at 7:00 pm on the fourth Tuesday of each month, and in special meetings as required.

Session last met on January 23, 2018 at which time a number of matters were addressed. Brief highlights of the more important issues follow:

- We regretfully accepted the resignation of Elder Sharon McKenzie
- Concern surfaced relating to the Presbyterian Sharing allocation assigned to St. John's, and that, given our current financial situation, the church would be unable to meet it. The Financial Committee of Session recommended a reduced levy of \$5,000.
- It was agreed that those youth from St. John's who attended Camp Douglas last summer, along with the Camp Douglas Director, be invited to do a brief presentation on their experience at an upcoming worship service.
- Session also agreed that the date of the St. John's Annual Meeting be changed to **March 3, 2018**, and that future annual meetings be held on the last Saturday of February.
- Elders had previously received and reviewed the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) General Assembly Strategic Plan for the PCC that was approved in 2016. The goals of the plan encompass Visionary Leadership, the Empowering of resources, and Relational Connections that bring Christ's mission to the local, national and international communities. St. John's will complete a questionnaire on how we plan to incorporate the national vision into our ministries.
- As with any faith worship location, St. John's church is also bound by secular law when it comes to being a work place for our staff. As such, WorkSafe B.C. directed in December 2017 that St. John's take steps to become compliant with its work place bullying and harassment legislation. Hence, the WorkSafe B.C. signs you see in the office and main hall. Other steps are being taken to bring the church into full compliance.
- The Proclamation Initiative will be held at St. John's from April 10-14, 2018. Much involvement by other congregations and parishioners is required to bring this about. Working in teams, individuals read from the Bible daily over this period of time until the complete Bible is read. It winds up with a group celebration. **We need readers from St. John's.** See Elder Sheila Jakus.
- The Outreach & Stewardship Committee is engaged in a number of ongoing projects. The weekly Thursday Outreach Ministry to Women, the Friday Lunch Hut, and weekly ESL classes are but a few of the activities that come under the purview of this committee. The committee is currently looking at ways St. John's can assist a Syrian refugee family being sponsored by another local congregation. Over Christmas, committee members and other parishioners spearheaded a successful, and much appreciated, effort to assist a local family in need. The Session Benevolent Fund was also used to support this effort.
- Don't forget that Lenten Luncheons started on February 22nd. St. John's will host the luncheon scheduled for March 15th at St. Mark's Anglican Church.

- Given the aging demographic of St. John's, and the ongoing and growing need for pastoral care, Session would welcome someone from the congregation to take on the crucial role of **Pastoral Care Coordinator. See the Minister, the Clerk or any Elder for further information.**
- Given the congregation's challenging financial situation, the Financial Committee has asked for assistance from the church Legacy Trust Fund. While consideration may be given to some of what is requested, the fund operates under strict guidelines that constrain the use of its assets, and not all that the committee has requested can be granted.
- And, still on the topic of finances, the Financial Committee identified a clear and urgent need for a church Treasurer (which the congregation has been without for some time), and made that recommendation to Session. The need for a qualified Treasurer becomes more urgent in order to meet Presbytery financial guidelines placed on congregations. Session is seeking either a qualified volunteer from the congregation, or a paid individual with the necessary background, to fill this position. **See the Minister, the Clerk of Session or your elder if you are qualified and are interested, or know someone who might be.**
- Each month the Session receives a detailed report on the activities and initiatives underway in our Presbytery (the Presbytery of Westminster). Our Minister and our Representative Elder to Presbytery, Emily Wilson, attend Presbytery meetings faithfully. Emily then reports back to Session on important matters that are addressed. Emily plans to institute a Presbytery newsletter for St. John's so our parishioners are aware of all the work that goes on in Presbytery, how it affects us as a congregation, and so that our congregants have a better understanding of this higher court of our church in the Lower Mainland.
- And speaking of Presbytery, since 2013 the Presbytery of Westminister Renewal Committee has been seeking a more efficient way of conducting Presbytery affairs, and changing the role of Presbytery from that of "managing congregations" to that of providing leadership to congregations. Part of this change would be Presbytery providing a broad Vision for congregational ministries. Fast forward to Saturday, February 17, 2018, and we find the Presbytery Vision Task Force hosting a "visioning day" at St. Andrews St. and Stephens Presbyterian Church in North Vancouver. The Rev. Dr. Peter Coutts from Calgary Presbytery was brought in to facilitate this gathering of over 80 Ministers, Elders and congregants from Westminister Presbytery, including our Minister, Emily Wilson, Lesley Leishman and Me. At day's end I think we from St. John's came away with the realization that, if our Presbyterian ministry is to survive, change is necessary. And that can only happen if each and every one of us steps forward to be a disciple of Christ and a bringer of change.
- The Session would appreciate your feedback on the *Session Chronicles* (the good, the bad, and the ugly). You can talk to the Elders about it, or send me an email.

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