

KUC Transition Team Evaluation Report



Spirit God, Be Our Breath
(More Voices #150)

Spirit God: Be our Breath,
Be our Song.
Blow through Us,
Bringing Strength to move on.
Through change, through challenge,
We'll greet the new dawn.
Spirit God, Be our Song

Background

Rev. Peter Lougheed accepted another call in the summer of 2007 after 14 years of full-time ministry at Kanata United Church (KUC). A retired Supply Minister, Rev. Barry Goodwin, was hired in the Fall of 2007 on a part-time basis to work with our incumbent full-time Ordained Minister, Rev. Eileen Hepplewhite, during the year following Rev. Lougheed's departure. On February 10, 2008, the congregation accepted the recommendation in the December 2007 Joint Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) Report that KUC enter into a period of intentional transition and interim ministry. After over 40 years the JNAC felt that KUC lacked a clear and shared sense of direction and concerted action as to where KUC wished to focus its efforts as a Christian community in a growing, changing neighbourhood. A period of intentional transition would also allow KUC time to explore more fully its future model of ministry, given the anticipated retirement in June 2010 of Rev. Hepplewhite.

The congregation approved eight lay members representing a cross-section of the congregation to be on the Transition Team while Pastoral Relations Committee nominated the late Rev. Jim Uhrich and Bryan Giffin as the Presbytery representatives. The Team held its first meeting on March 27, 2008.

KUC's Goals for Interim Ministry

The Transition Team's first task was to develop goals for this period of intentional transition and Interim Ministry. After a short period for consultations, the congregation adopted on May 25, 2008 a Goal Statement to serve as the basis for the two-year Interim Ministry at KUC.

KUC Transition Team Evaluation Report



Goal Statement:

The congregation will have a new sense of identity as a church with a renewed mission within the congregation and in the wider community.

1. The congregation will develop a shared, living mission that will inspire commitment and enthusiasm, providing direction and focus for our church programs, activities, and celebrations.
2. The congregation will identify structures, functions and relationships that may need to be developed and/or altered, to support and facilitate the emerging mission.
3. The congregation will approve an appropriate model for future Christian ministry that will provide the necessary leadership to meet our emerging mission.

The Transition Team next undertook to recruit our Interim Minister. Rev. Angela Bailey was called as KUC's Interim Minister for the two year period from August 1, 2008 to July 31, 2010. The Transition Team subsequently considered possible refinements to the Goal Statement, but decided that revisions were not necessary.

Transition Team at Work

The Transition Team met on a monthly basis throughout the period of interim ministry, and met more frequently as required. The Team functioned in a positive, open and collegial fashion, with team members' commitment reflected in a high level of participation, support and interest throughout the process. Smaller sub-groups were established to tackle specific tasks as required. The Team established for the congregation at the outset a timetable for the "stepping stones" in the Interim ministry process and was able to keep to the expected timeline.

Considerable effort was made to inform, up-date and involve the congregation throughout the process. This was done through newsletters, verbal announcements, special email messages, posters and the KUC Transition website. The Chair of Transition became a member of the KUC Board (subsequently renamed Council) and provided regular written and verbal reports to promote understanding and commitment. Transition Team members were already involved in the Stewardship, Outreach, Worship and M&P Committees. Transition Team members were nominated during the transition process to

KUC Transition Team Evaluation Report



liaise with and participate in the Christian Development and Communications Committees. Rev. Bailey was extremely effective in weaving transition themes within Worship and throughout her extensive engagement in the life and work of the church. Modest adaptations to the Worship service helped encourage a sense of opportunity and change while reinforcing key themes central to transition itself. Repeated communication of core messages to reach a broad audience within the congregation remained a constant challenge.

We followed the process and objectives for intentional transition as outlined by the UCC under Rev. Bailey's leadership.

The congregation participated actively in spirit-filled explorations of our history ("The Tapestry of Our Times", November 2008) and our identity ("Terry", March 2009). Drawing on these exercises and other resources, the Transition Team presented the following motion for consideration by the congregation:

*"Moved that Kanata United Church, in keeping with its Interim Ministry goals, accepts the Transition Team's recommendation for **an intentional focus on Faith Development and Learning**, within our continuing mission as a church family grounded in Christian Worship and Reaching Out as a faith community."*

The congregation discussed and then unanimously adopted the motion at a well-attended special congregational meeting on May 31, 2009.

The Transition team then shifted its focus to developing an appropriate model of ministry to support the congregation in fulfilling its renewed mission, as identified in the Goal Statement. After several consultations with the Pastoral Relations Committee of Ottawa Presbytery, it was agreed that the KUC Board could appoint the Transition Team members to function as a Joint Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC), with the addition of two members. During the period September 2009 to January 2010, the Transition Team members met both as Transition and as an expanded JNAC. As Transition, a model of ministry was developed. The JNAC refined the details of the model of ministry and, in a joint Transition/JNAC process, consulted the congregation on the proposed model.

In the February-April 2010 period, the Transition Team presented to the KUC Council two papers containing specific reflections on the implications of a focus on Faith Development and Learning and on needed changes to the KUC governance structure. These proposals are accessible to the wider congregation through the KUC Transition website.

KUC Transition Team Evaluation Report



The Transition Team has taken steps to enhance connections with the wider church and has been attentive to issues around mobilizing lay leadership. The Transition Team had to devote attention to the dynamics of Interim Ministry in a Team ministry context, including consultations and conversations with Presbytery and regular meetings involving the Chairs of Transition and M&P with Rev. Bailey and Rev. Hepplewhite.

Findings/Reflections

In the Transition Team's opinion, the Goals set by the congregation have all been achieved, or all well underway to fulfillment:

- The congregation has adopted a renewed statement of intentional focus on Faith Development and Learning (FD&L)
- The congregation (through the Council) has begun to consider the need for altered structures and relationships to facilitate the renewed mission
- The congregation has approved a new model of ministry to support our renewed mission that includes a full-time Ordained Minister and a half-time ministry personnel, as well as expanded lay leadership involvement.

KUC has the opportunity to become a more visible centre for FD&L within our community. The Transition Team took concrete steps to model one exciting possibility created by this renewed focus on FD&L by launching a Fall event open to the congregation and the broader community to help deepen our understanding of our own faith traditions and history (presentations by Dr. Peter Flint). A Fall 2010 event on Islam involving Raheel Raza is currently being planned. A new and enthusiastic lay group has emerged to provide leadership and support for such events. Rev. Bailey has been instrumental in raising these opportunities, in identifying and contacting resources through her own extensive networks, and in helping demonstrate that KUC has lay leadership capable of ensuring well-structured and organized events.

Council and its Committees are beginning to reflect more deeply on the implications of this renewed sense of mission for their own work and for reinforcing links across the life and work of the congregation. Based on a Transition Team recommendation, the Council has established a Planning Group for an initial two year period to facilitate ongoing reflections and to help establish specific objectives that are supportive of the new focus on Faith Development and Learning. The Transition Team sees the work of the Planning Group as an important element in supporting deepened ownership and follow-up by the Council to the congregation's decision. The Joint Search Committee is advancing well in its work to recruit new staff based on the model of ministry developed by the Transition Team and JNAC that will provide the future leadership in support of the renewed focus on Faith Development and Learning.

KUC Transition Team Evaluation Report



Bringing change to the culture and systems within KUC that reflect the congregation's stated intentional focus on Faith Development and Learning will, however, take time and sustained effort. It will require a look back in a few years to determine if the congregation has truly developed and sustained "a shared, living mission that will inspire commitment and enthusiasm, providing direction and focus for our church programs, activities, and celebrations."

Conclusions

For Kanata United Church

The Transition Team concludes its mandate at the end of July, 2010, with ownership for future action passing to Council.

1. The congregation has taken an important step through its intentional transition process and Interim Ministry to develop a renewed sense of mission. It takes time to absorb such important changes and to address resistance to them. The Transition Team believes that KUC's Council together with the new staff will need to play a strong role at several levels, including:

- engaging the congregation in deepening their understanding of exciting possibilities open to KUC through its focus on Faith Development and Learning. Opportunities to engage the congregation exist, for example, through a more creative use of communications tools like the newsletter, our website and social networks like Facebook; through the next Every Person Visitation to explore congregational goals and concerns; and through the development of a narrative budget for use at the AGM.
- sustaining and making visible concrete examples of this intentional focus, such as through the proposed Interfaith event in the Fall 2010, weaving related events and activities into the tapestry of our life and work

2. The Transition Team encourages the Council to be deliberate in pushing forward to refine its own organizational structure in support the intentional focus on Faith Development and Learning. This includes:

- developing more opportunities to explore together their spiritual journey and leadership as a Council in their role as "elders" and as "Session"
- refining the Committee structure to reduce the size of Council, to breakdown silos and to improve communication in support of agreed themes and objectives
- exploring ways to focus more on policy issues while validating the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of Committees.

KUC Transition Team Evaluation Report



3. The Transition Team suggests that Council give greater attention to identifying, encouraging, and mentoring lay leadership. An ageing demographic within the church combined with a more mobile, time-challenged, less church-centered community raise serious concerns about the ability of the church over time to engage its lay members in leadership positions. KUC needs to consider different strategies and approaches to engage and support lay members given the changes going on around us. A task force of interested members of the congregation might be invited to take up this challenge, working with Stewardship Committee.

4. The Transition Team considers that the Council, with the support and input of the congregation, should review KUC's structures and approaches to welcoming visitors and new members, not only on Sunday mornings but also as people enter through the different activities and programs of the church e.g. Quilting Group; Women's Groups; BookFair; Children's choir (formerly Bullfrogs and Butterflies); Camp Awesome. In an increasingly diverse community, our Christian hospitality remains integral as a visible expression of our faith.

For Ottawa Presbytery

1. It would have been beneficial for the work of the Transition Team to have had greater continuity and participation by a Presbytery clergy representative. There has not been a visible presence of a clergy representative on the Transition Team and JNAC over this past year nor has a clergy representative been nominated to serve on the current JSC.

2. The Transition Team believes that Interim Ministry in a team ministry context would have benefited greatly from a more intentional and pro-active role by Ottawa Presbytery's Pastoral Relations Committee and the Conference Personnel Minister. The process at KUC would have benefitted, for example, from an early assessment and facilitation around the transition process to ensure roles and responsibilities of staff are clarified and guidelines for standards of practice and ethical standards reinforced. The role of M&P and the relationship with the Transition Team and Interim Minister also needed to be clarified.

3. The Transition Team considers that it could have effectively and efficiently managed the requirements of a JNAC without the overlay of establishing a separate JNAC Committee. Ottawa Presbytery and the UCC are invited to assess opportunities to reduce layers of structure and process, wherever appropriate. This could encourage the engagement of local lay members, be reflective of the shortage of Presbytery-wide resources and reduce the perception among many congregational members of an often confusing and overly bureaucratic church.

KUC Transition Team Evaluation Report



Acknowledgements

The Transition Team has very much benefited from the wise counsel and advice both of our clergy Presbytery representatives, the late Rev. Jim Uhrich and Rev. Neil Wallace and of Bryan Giffen, the lay Presbytery representative. Bryan has travelled with us on this entire journey and continues with the JSC. We are very grateful for his wisdom, dedication and faithfulness without which our process could not have been sustained. We appreciated the time and commitment of Rev. Debbie Aitken of the Ottawa & Montreal Conference in her many capacities throughout our process.

We have been privileged to work under the leadership of Rev. Angela Bailey as our Interim Minister. Angela has provided a wealth of faith-inspired insight and guidance, lifting up opportunities and challenges at KUC while carefully "managing the managers" as she worked with the Transition Team. Angela has been highly appreciated and respected by the congregation. Special references have been made about her empathy, pastoral care skills, thoughtful and thought-provoking sermons, as well as many other contributions.. She has been very supportive of staff, devoting considerable time and energy to maintaining a positive working environment.

We thank Sue Maslin for her participation on the Transition Team, up to the time she assumed the role of Chair of Council. We have benefited from the support and advice offered by all members of the Council over these past two years. We appreciated our supportive staff for their work and contributions.

And most important, the Transition Team thanks the congregation for its commitment and support for this time of intentional transition. We hope that we have been faithful to listening to your concerns and supporting you in your important deliberations and decisions as we journey together.

Blessings

Robert Ashton, Lindsay Blue, Rod Delcourt, Don George, Stephen Free (Chair), Helen Pinel, Maureen Purnell, Deepak Wanner