

CHALMERS UNITED CHURCH



...A plan to move forward

What we have done....

It is the purpose of the time of transition to learn who we are, what our strengths are, and where we see our future. To begin this process we did an exercise a few weeks ago, in which we invited everyone to put down some thoughts under the headings of: What nurtures me at Chalmers; What my gripes are at Chalmers; Why I come to Chalmers and; My wish list for Chalmers. The collated comments from that activity are available at the back of the church.

We have also started to explore our past with our Chalmers Vignettes each Sunday as well as the new historical masthead on each Sunday's bulletin.

What we are planning to do...

Along with the guidance of Rev. Barry Goodwin, the transition team has put together an action plan to move forward from this point. Following Rev. Barry Goodwin's lead, we have adopted a process called, Appreciative Inquiry. At its core, Appreciative Inquiry is the study and exploration of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best.

It is based on the assumption that every living system has a hidden and underutilized core of strengths - its positive core – which, when revealed and tapped, provides a sustainable source of positive energy for both personal and organizational transformation.

It is broken into four sections – Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny.

We have begun the Discovery process, yet to further our discovery and start to dream, we have planned for 2 different small group conversations. The schedule is as follows:

January 29, 2012 Conversation #1

We will meet after the service and enjoy a provided lunch. Then we will form small groups to discuss a series of questions. A list of these questions is attached. Every group will have a scribe to record all the comments. The feedback will also help us structure the questions for Conversation #2. This exercise should last no longer than 2 hours.

February 13, 2012 Conversation #2

Starting on the 13th of February and continuing through to March, these conversations will take place in less formal settings. One setting will be informal house gatherings. A facilitator from the transition team will be present with the questions and will record the feedback. Another option, for those unable to attend a house gathering, will be paper surveys. This will ensure that the ideas of all members of the congregation will be captured. Due to the importance of these conversations, only signed surveys will be reviewed. One-on-one follow ups to the paper surveys can also be arranged.

We will provide more information about the house gatherings once arrangements have been made. If you are interested in hosting a house gathering, please contact Katharine Smithrim (ks4@queensu.ca).

March 25, 2012 Provocative Proposals

With the feedback from conversations #1 and #2, the transition team will then develop Provocative Proposals and present them to the congregation on the 25th of March. Provocative Proposals are statements of what our church aspires to be and to do, to accomplish its dream. It is an ideal that guides and gives direction to decision, actions and results. Provocative Proposals are “sign posts” of what is vital, healthy and faithful in our life together as God’s people in this place.

Once the Provocative Proposals have been approved by the congregation, the transition team will approach Presbytery for approval to proceed with a Joint Needs Assessment.

Conversation #1 Questions for Reflection January 29, 2012

1. What attracted you to Chalmers United Church?
2. What continues to sustain your interest and commitment?
3. What do you consider to be the characteristic strengths of the congregation?
(What do we do well?)
4. Share a memory at Chalmers that brought you special joy and thankfulness?
5. Make three wishes for the future of Chalmers.

Appreciative Inquiry

Assumptions

1. In every organization, some things work well.
2. What we focus on becomes our reality.
3. Asking questions influences the group.
4. People have more confidence in the journey to the future when they carry forward parts of the past.
5. If we carry parts of the past into the future, they should be what is best about the past.
6. It is important to value differences.
7. The language we use creates our reality.
8. Outcomes should be useful.
9. All steps are collaborative.

The process can be described in terms of the 4 D's – Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny.

Discovery – This process searches for, highlights, and illuminates those factors that give life to the organization, the “best of what is” in any given situation. In each case the task is to promote organizational learning by sharing stories about times when these qualities were at their best and analyzing the forces and factors that made them possible.

Dream – When the best of what has been identified, the mind naturally begins to search beyond this point and begins to envision new possibilities. The task in this phase is to paint a compelling picture of what the organization could and should become as it conforms to people's deepest hopes and highlights aspirations.

Design – The 3rd phase is to design the future through dialogue. Once people's hopes and dreams have been articulated, the task is to design the organization's social architecture – norms, values, structures, strategies, systems, patterns of relationship, ways of doing things – that can bring the dreams to life. It is a process of building commitment to a common future by dialogue, crafting and creating until you get to the point where everyone can say, “Yes, this is the kind of organization or community that I want to invest my energies in. Let's make it happen.” The key in this phase is to create a deliberately inclusive and supportive context for conversation and co-creation.

Destiny – The final phase is an invitation to construct the future through innovation and action. Appreciative Inquiry establishes a momentum of its own. People find innovative ways to help move the organization closer to the ideal. Because the ideals are grounded in realities, the confidence is there to facilitate positive change.