



PARKDALE MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting: Tuesday, September 23, 2008: held at Epiphany & St. Marks

Present:

St. Anne's: Phil Cooper

Epiphany & St. Mark: Anne Barcham, Ken Borrett, Dorothy Peers

St. George the Martyr: Max Woolaver, George Lowe

St. Mary Magdalene: Brian Clarke, Harold Nahabedian

St. Matthias: Sharon Chandler, Eleanor Emmel, Jeffry Kennedy

St. Stephen in the Fields: Christian Swayne

St. Thomas: Mark Andrews, Kevin Toyne

Diocese of Toronto: Philip Poole

Secretary: Norah Bolton

Regrets: Heather McGregor, Catharine Dennison, Roy Schatz

1. Welcome, opening prayers and announcement

The chairman, Brian Clarke, welcomed those present and asked them to introduce themselves. He invited Christian Swayne to lead in opening prayers.

2. Approval of Agenda

Jeff Kennedy asked that the meeting end at the announced time.

Dorothy Peers requested that since Bishop Poole was delayed, she would like to make an announcement. A workshop entitled "Pens against Poverty" is to take place on November 8 at Epiphany & St. Mark. Led by Murray McAdam of the Diocese, the workshop is designed to train and encourage participants to advocate for social justice. Electronic versions of the poster are available and print ones were distributed for further promotion

The agenda was then approved. (Toyne/Borrett)

3. Opening remarks (Bishop Poole)

Philip Poole observed that because of his late arrival he would defer opening remarks except to say that Lambeth had been a positive experience with much to tell. As well as attending the conference, he had tried to learn more of what was happening at the parish level. He encouraged members to learn more about the Fresh Expressions initiatives in the UK with the caveat that programs might be adapted for Canadian use rather than adopted.

4. Approval of minutes of June 12th meeting and business arising

The minutes were approved.

5. Background and response to July 11 letter

Brian Clarke noted that the financial statements he had requested were almost complete and when all were received, a financial update on 2007 operating revenues and expenses would be reissued. He also noted that he had not received e-mail addresses of wardens to date. A short discussion indicated that some parishes felt that they were keeping the parish well informed of council activities. The offer was made again that parishes could have Council minutes sent to any parish leaders if they wished. (*Minutes are also posted on the Parkdale Deanery website at www.parkdaledeanery.ca*)

6. Updates from working groups and report on picnic

There were no reports from working groups. The picnic was judged a success with good response for a first offering. The small number of children attending was noted, but the participation of those who did, was praised.

7. Life Cycles, - presentation and discussion

There was a presentation on the pattern of church life cycles obtained through the congregational development department of The Episcopal Church. Participants were then ask to estimate the life stage of the Council itself and of their respective parishes.

The majority felt the Council was stable, though some would have preferred a term like “stagnation”. Attitudes vary from meeting to meeting and members oscillate between optimism and discouragement.

The Bishop commented that he did not want to comment on individual parishes, but that he agreed with the views expressed about the Council. We had to move forward or decline would follow. The Council is one of three Credit Valley initiatives and they are tracking in similar ways with varied reactions. What has been helpful is a better understanding of urban ministry.

A wider variation occurred in assessment of parishes:

Those present characterized their own parishes as

Stable (5 persons)

Redefining/Strengthening (4 persons)

Refining/ but also showing some signs of decline (3 persons)

Declining (2 persons)

Serious decline/Dying (1)

The assessment of how parishioners viewed their situations was different again. The group thought that parishioners perceived their parishes as

Stable (9 persons)

Redefining/Rebirth (4 persons)

Denial (1 person)

Unknown (1 person)

The attitudes of the geographic neighbourhoods were more varied still. Many felt they did not know. Some noted that neighbours thought the parish buildings and green space were positive forces but that this did not translate into involvement or attendance. Those in our midst do not have a “churchgoing way of life”. The absence of young people around the Council table sent a message in its own right. Those who are coming into the area and trying us out are sophisticated and have high expectations. Some have young families, most have heavy expenses and little time and will not be able to provide us with financial benefits in the immediate future. The general consensus is that we are in contact with very few of our neighbours.

Max Woolaver observed that we are in Chapter 3 of the Council’s process and the future is our responsibility. We asked for the Council and we have to be the source of creative liaison going forward. There is nobody else but us, - and we can be a potent force with enormous resources.

8. Date of next meeting: Tuesday, October 21.

The meeting date was moved from the previously announced one and will take place at St. Anne’s. Details will follow.

9. Closing prayers and adjournment

The Bishop urged all to advise their parishioners to vote in the coming election especially when there are important issues before the country. He also noted that he would be taking part in the Walk of Witness scheduled for later in the month in Ottawa. He led the closing prayers and the meeting was adjourned.