

St. Paul's United Church votes in favour of exploring a new Main St. presence

Process begins to identify a viable plan to forward the mission of local congregation

Milton, Ontario May 4, 2009 - Milton's 120 year-old St. Paul's United Church is moving forward with a local developer to examine the viability of designing and building a seniors' life-lease residence that would include a new church facility on its current Main St. property.

"The cost of restoration and upgrading our existing edifice far exceeds what our current congregation can afford," said Rev. John Benham. "Despite the efforts and well-intentioned contributions of so many, the burden of our deteriorating facility has passed the point of being a sustainable asset and frankly is directly threatening the essence of what makes us a community church; namely, our spiritual, educational and outreach projects."

On Sunday April 19, members of St. Paul's voted in favour of signing a letter of intent with local businessman, Stephen Baker, and representatives of Life Lease Associates of Canada. So now, over a period of 90 days the feasibility of such a venture is being explored and the necessary local approvals are being sought to map out an achievable plan that will ultimately re-prioritize the elements that contribute to St. Paul's mission in Milton.

Aware of the many memorial and historical features of the present structure, serious consideration will be devoted to the design criteria of a new church facility to be built along with the residential component. Concerns have already been raised among members as to how elements such as the stained glass windows and organ will be dealt with, within a newly configured place of worship. St. Paul's intends to work through this process in a public and transparent manner in keeping with the efforts that have led to this point.

"We need to be clear that the motivation for examining options to re-develop the physical layout of St. Paul's is based on the congregation's expressed desire to remain as a vital part of Milton's downtown core," said Kathy Sellers, St. Paul's chair of council. "For us to remain in our present location we need a plan that removes the financial burden on future generations of supporting an aging building and also starts the process of investing in spiritual and social programming that reflects our religious beliefs and ultimately benefits the greater Milton community."

The next three months will see the exploration of design criteria for a new structure, municipal permits and necessary building approvals. Meanwhile, work has already begun to articulate the future goals of the church based on a great deal of research and input from the congregation over a number of years. As one example, St. Paul's members have made a clear expression that a renewed spiritual direction will include promoting the church's relevance and connection to Milton's ever-growing population base. Other projects might include partnering with like-minded organizations to address spiritual and social needs in the local community, as well as with causes outside the community that can be similarly justified and supported.

Long time member Doug Dryden said, "It's an answer to prayer really, we didn't know how we could keep going with our old building. I'll be sad to see it go, but I'm hopeful about what a new facility will enable us to do as we seek to serve this community in the Spirit of Christ."

Located at 123 Main Street in Milton, St. Paul's United Church is a welcoming congregation that offers a range of spiritual programs and support to the surrounding area. You are invited to attend Sunday worship services held weekly at 10:30 a.m. or participate in any number of our mid-week activities, join in our special events, or consult one of our ministers for personal assistance.

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