

Important Message from the Worship Team:

The Ground Has Shifted Beneath Our Feet

In dreaming, planning and praying about ways of experiencing Sunday morning services, one of the valuable resources that the Worship Team reflected on was a **2015 Sabbatical Report by Rev. Christopher White**, of Fairlawn United Church in Toronto, Ontario. He believes that a critical shift is necessary for churches to remain “a vital expression of the Christian faith despite the ebbs and flows of changing culture and history”.

The Worship Team feels that the report is important enough that it be made available to everyone in the congregation, as it not only succinctly highlights the challenges faced by United Churches across Canada but also offers significant recommendations for congregations to consider in their own communities; recommendations that if implemented might “**shift churches into some important new expressions of ministry**”.

Copies of the report are available at both entrances to the sanctuary, as well as on-line at our LUC website: lennoxvilleunitedchurch.com.

Rev. White identifies some key challenges that churches have been and are facing: The Spiritual Revolution; The Technical Revolution; The Rise of social media; Shifting family, work and leisure patterns; The Growing gap between the rich and poor; A New understanding of God.

Two essential questions arise from his study:

1). Are we investing the resources that past generations have bequeathed to the church to do our best to create a sustainable future? 2). The Church: Where are we today?

Rev. White’s recommendations range from minor to transformative: Adding services during the week that are significantly different from current Sunday morning services; Implementing small group ministries; Creating a new ministry position for the Millennial generation; Re-examining the role of staff in building an effective church.

The ultimate goal Rev. White encourages going forward, is for churches to put the emphasis on the **“mobilization and empowerment of the whole congregation for the purpose of transforming the surrounding community and the world”**.

At the end the report lists six key measurements for church communities:

- 1). **How is people’s spiritual growth being enhanced?**
- 2). **Are all generations growing in their relationship with God?**
- 3). **How is their faith developing?**
- 4). **How are our relationships with each other deepening?**
- 5). **How are we growing in compassion and generosity?**
- 6). **How is our community/city a better place because of what we are doing?**

Rev. White concludes with, “**If all of us are growing in these areas, then our church(es) can not help but succeed**”.

The Worship Team is making this report available with a vision of holding larger gatherings to discuss the report and to reflect on how the recommendations could guide LUC as we face the challenges of being a faith community now and into the future.

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