

**Emily starts:**

The season of Pentecost speaks to change. At the Festival of Pentecost in the Book of Acts, people spoke in tongues so that visiting Jews all understood one another. That was a change! It was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and it marks the beginning of the Christian church. Today we officially welcome Shelagh as our new lead Minister at First Met, a change in leadership. We might ask, "What is the new thing God is doing in our midst today?" It was in the study of the book "Weird Church" that we realized that conditions have changed so drastically that unless we are willing to creatively adapt, our extinction is immanent. That's a scary thought for most of us. Ross - What's the next chapter in our congregational life history supposed to look like, and how do we get there?

**Ross Responds:**

That's a difficult question Emily and even though I knew you were going to ask it, because it's in our script for this morning, I don't have a very concise answer!!

I can say this though.

First Met's next Chapter has already begun.

It began several years ago with the congregation asking ourselves some very big questions about our future.

Since then we have been working together and, with God's help, are finding the answers to some of the big questions.

Think of our new Lead Minister, the Reverend Shelagh MacKinnon, and our decision last year to move forward with redevelopment of the site here on Balmoral Rd.

In the months ahead the Board will move forward with our strategic planning project.

The planning process will provide us with even more clarity about the next Chapter in the story of First Met.

Among other things it will provide a plan that will help ensure First Met remains vital and relevant as we go through the redevelopment of our property.

The Board has invited about 20 Team leaders and congregational members to join us in a full day, facilitated planning session to be held next Saturday.

As we prepare for this session, we are reviewing our current strategic plan that was last updated in 2015.

We are also documenting First Met's record of accomplishments, gains and losses and reviewing the numerous congregational conversations organized over the past 3 years.

Each of those conversations addressed a variety of questions about the future of our congregation, it's ministries and programs.

It seems clear from those conversations that the congregation wants to continue and improve the good work of First Met's ministries and programs.

There was also recognition that the decline in our human and financial resources means that First Met will need to find new ways and means to sustain and improve the good works we want to keep doing.

The documents we are now reviewing contain many insightful comments and creative suggestions from the congregation which will inform our discussions as we work together to prepare a new strategic plan.

I think the next Chapter for First Met will be exciting for all of us as we experience new beginnings for our buildings here on Balmoral Rd as well as for our ministries and programs.

Liane what are your thoughts on the next Chapter in the future of First Met?

### **Liane Responds:**

I just want to point out that this is not the first time that our church has transformed. Even the creation of the United Church of Canada in 1925 was due to some far-sighted people who saw that their individual denominations would not survive without transformation. More recently (though already over 20 years ago), First United and Metropolitan United amalgamated knowing they would form a stronger community together than apart. They wanted important initiatives like the Open Door to continue and in fact thrive when it eventually became Our Place in 2005. It was also at the time of amalgamation that the Foundation funds were created. These funds generate income that First Met has been using (along with some capital occasionally) and will continue to use to maintain and transform its ministries. Ross, you mentioned the strategic planning exercise we will be undertaking next Saturday. This plan will provide focus on which ministries to spend these funds to have the greatest impact on people's lives. I'll just add that many of those people who saw amalgamation as a necessary transformation are still members of First Met today. These members and many others continue to support its ministries by making either living gifts or eventually bequests to these Foundation funds. These individuals believe that the future of First Met is important and needs to be supported. So, Emily, looking to that future, what are some examples of the New Beginnings including, for example, First Met's relationship with Our Place and the North Park community that are being discussed by the Weird Church Team?

### **Emily Responds:**

Well, we are still in the early development stage and at this point are planning to attend the North Park Neighbourhood Association meeting on June 19<sup>th</sup> to see how they see the needs of this community in which our church is located. We have developed some Terms of Reference which speak to implementing innovative ideas, making sure we

keep the channels of communication open to the Board and congregation, and working with the other teams in the church. The hope is that we will look outward rather than just inward. I have connected with the Rev Ingrid Brown in Cumberland on the North Island, who leads a Weird Church there and it is exciting to hear how they are “reforming” after the closure of their church. I can give you a couple of examples that have been tried on the North Island:

Friday Feast – Dinner, Music and Storytelling, such as talking about how God has shown up in their lives;

Coffee and Conversations that Matter such as “Neighbourhood Dreaming and Painting a Pew” or “Breaking Down Barriers – Tearing Down Our Walls to Build Longer Tables”.

They are offering a multitude of new ways of coming together as a community.

The United Church of Canada is offering some start up funding through a program called Embracing the Spirit Project, so we hope we may be eligible for some help to get started. There are 60 Minute Innovation Workshops which we can access to get new ideas as well. The United Church is definitely embracing change!

..... Ross what steps will we take to make sure that the Redevelopment Project remains aligned with FMUC’s vision as it evolves over time?

**Ross Responds:**

Emily, Next week, during the service we will hear an update on our redevelopment project from Terry Harrison of the Pacific Mountain Region. Her project team will soon be starting to prepare space plans for the restoration of the Heritage Building and the construction of the new rental apartment building on the site of the Fellowship Hall.

At the end of last year First Met’s Redevelopment Task Group completed gathering and collating information about our current use of space and our expected future space needs.

A major theme in the input we gathered was the need for our future space to be multi-use and flexible. This will allow First Met to be responsive to future changes in our space needs resulting from changing priorities.

The current redevelopment plan includes a restoration project that will be delivered in phases over a 10-15 year period.

The extended timeframe for this project will give First Met some additional flexibility to adjust the project plans and schedules if needed to respond to our changing priorities.

I believe the current redevelopment plan, in combination with our design criteria for flexible, multi-use spaces will help ensure that we can keep the redevelopment project aligned with our changing priorities in the future.

Liane do you have any other thoughts on the transformation journey on which FMUC has embarked.

**Liane Responds:**

Like the disciples, we will have our naysayers in this transformation journey (though hopefully they don't think we are drunk!). However, the essence of church, the stories of loving our neighbour, compassion and caring, community, and justice for all will not change. Like the disciples who had just said goodbye to Jesus as he ascended to Heaven and might have felt abandoned by God until the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, we sometimes have difficulty remembering that the continuity and care of God is everlasting. We have a great community sustained by the love and presence of God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God. Amen