

**Council Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday September 14, 2022 at 1900h**  
**Via Videoconference**

**Present:** Al Hubbard (video conference host), Barb Abrams (representing Trustees), Carol Wilson, Christine Whiting, Elisabeth Evans, Heather McGillis, Kay Cranston, Joanne Quennell, Louise Sinclair, Richard Cranston, Stephen White (representing Property), Steve Shaver, Susan Gittings, Teresa Madeira

**Regrets:** Andy Choles, Clarke Grice, Dana Bryant-Giguere, David Wheeler, Rick Donaldson, Pat Skinner, Shawn Bausch

**Ministry Staff:** Rev. Heather Weaver-Orosz, Victoria Keane

**By Invitation:** Joan Cobbold, Mary Dowding-Paré

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**Call to Order**

Richard Cranston called the Special Council Meeting of **September 14, 2022** to order.

A quorum (16) of Council members were present.

**Opening Remarks** Richard Cranston

Richard welcomed committee representatives Barb Abrams (Trustees, Exploratory Committee), Stephen White (Property), and Joan Cobbold and Mary Dowding- Paré from the Exploratory Committee. He reviewed video conference courtesies and procedures, including voting by verbal response for opposition or abstention. He reviewed the circulated agenda and advised that any other business will be deferred until the next regular Council meeting on September 21.

**Report from Exploratory Committee (EC)** Richard Cranston

Before presenting the report and recommendations from the EC, Richard asked that regardless of the outcome of this meeting, everyone keep the discussions confidential until the congregation has been notified. He then delivered the EC's report by slide presentation, consisting of the following:

- Acknowledgement of the EC members
- Mandate of the Committee
- Review of events leading up to formation of the EC
- Nature and tone of discussions at meetings among EC and with St. Stephen's on-the-Hill (SSOTH) from June – August
- EC's assessment:
  - What CF has in common with SSOTH

- Key differences between CF and SSOTH
- Key benefits of amalgamation
- EC's recommendation and next steps:
  - It would be advisable and beneficial to recommend potential amalgamation with SSOTH
  - Form an Amalgamation Committee to work with SSOTH on due diligence for potential amalgamation
  - Bring these recommendations to the congregation for approval

The following motions were presented to Council:

- MOTION by Mary Dowding-Paré, SECONDED by Barb Abrams, that Christ First Council receive and approve the report of the Exploratory Committee for presentation at a Special Congregational Meeting on October 2, 2022.
  - Discussion and clarification points:
    - Timelines for SSOTH team with respect to informing their congregation are aligned with those of CF
    - UPRC engagement by SSOTH (currently at the level of letter of intent) is on hold pending outcome of amalgamation discussions
    - EC's recommendation is not specifically to amalgamate, but rather to build on exploratory discussions thus far by proceeding to a deeper level of discussion and due diligence with SSOTH. An Amalgamation Committee would conduct this study and bring forward a recommendation to proceed or not proceed with amalgamation.
  - Motion CARRIED.
- MOTION by Richard Cranston, SECONDED by Barb Abrams that the congregation of Christ First approve the formation of an Amalgamation Committee working with a St. Stephen's on-the-Hill Amalgamation Committee to determine if mutually agreeable terms can be defined for an amalgamation with St. Stephens on-the-Hill, and if so, recommend to their respective Councils, Congregations and the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council to amalgamate the two churches. Members from Christ First to be appointed to this Committee are: Steve Shaver (Chair), Richard Cranston, Barb Abrams, Shawn Bausch, Dana Bryant-Giguère, Joan Cobbold, Mary Dowding-Paré. This committee is responsible for reporting to Council and the Congregation on a timely basis.
  - Discussion and clarification points:
    - EC does not perceive an urgency to the process, although SSOTH team has expressed eagerness to move forward. In the interest of conducting a thorough due diligence phase, CF team is reluctant to be constrained by an arbitrary deadline.
    - Concern was expressed that this should be considered a parallel process to growing and moving forward as a church. Pandemic and search for a minister have held back progress; it is time to reenergize. Consensus that we should proceed with adaptability while amalgamation discussions proceed, and not let that process detract from our initiatives. Council meetings can be a forum for keeping 'big picture' matters on the table as we go forward.
    - Visioning session was postponed pending outcome of Exploratory Committee discussions. The session was initially intended to provide guidance for creating our future legacy. We now need to determine whether the session should be

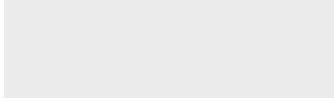
- conducted for CF alone or jointly with SSOTH in the context of potential amalgamation.
  - There is no guarantee that this opportunity to amalgamate with SSOTH will be available indefinitely, as they are also in the process of considering their future legacy in a proactive way.
  - Communications need to be handled with sensitivity. October 2 is a good opportunity for a first check in with the congregation.
- Motion CARRIED.
- MOTION to Council by Barb Abrams, SECONDED BY Christine Whiting that the Exploratory Committee be disbanded, with our sincere thanks following the October 2 meeting.
  - Motion CARRIED.
- Further discussion and next steps:
  - REOC initiatives and options are on hold, pending amalgamation process and visioning session. Once the wishes of the congregation are known, REOC can return to examining viable options for use of our property assets. Consensus that Council should begin planning soon for a visioning session.
  - Communication plan – next 2 weeks:
    - Meeting discussions are to be kept confidential by all Council members until October 2
    - Mary Dowding- Paré will draft a short message for Richard Cranston to convey to all staff members before September 18
    - Congregational announcements regarding timing and purpose of meeting (to receive a report and recommendation from EC) will begin Sunday September 18 and continue via eblast or letter
    - EC will begin to gather questions that arise over time for a ‘running script’; everyone is encouraged to forward questions/concerns to EC members
  - October 2 meeting time and format:
    - To be held in person between regular worship services to encourage maximum participation and live discussion
    - Rev. Heather and Victoria Keane will discuss how to abbreviate the services to accommodate the meeting
    - Engagement of young families must be considered. Victoria will arrange for child care – to be announced in congregational notice.

Richard closed the discussion by offering sincere thanks to the EC for their hard work throughout what has been an intense 3 months. In particular, he recognized Mary for her communications expertise and creating the slide presentation. His words of appreciation were met with applause by all present.

**Closing Prayer** Rev. Heather

**Adjournment** Louise Sinclair

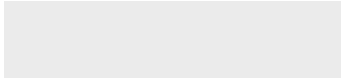
**Next Council Meeting** September 21, 2022



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Council Chair – Rick Cranston

September 21, 2022

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Date



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Council Secretary – Carol Wilson

Secretary: *CW*