



# NEWS from the BRIDGE

**Life at Bridge Street United Church (Belleville, ON) during COVID-19**  
An initiative brought to you by the Transition Team.

***Friday, April 17, 2020***

Welcome to our inaugural edition of 'NEWS from the BRIDGE'... a look at the ongoing life and work of our faith community at this unique time.

Watch for future editions where we'll highlight those other undertakings and activities that continue being done notwithstanding the suspension of routine church life.



## ***A NEW way to Worship***

Given that the provincial government has extended the Declaration of an Emergency for almost one month, plans are in the making to offer worship online.

Technical details are being considered and tested.

The first online service is scheduled for **Sunday, April 26<sup>th</sup>**.

Watch for further details in this section of News from the Bridge.



## ***Strategic Planning Committee Update – April 2020***

This is an update to the Congregation of BSUC on activities of its Strategic Planning Committee since the last update in January 2020.

The Committee has continued to meet regularly with committee meetings on 7 and 28 January; 3 and 19 March; and 14 April (the latter two by videoconference); Community Engagement Roundtable sessions were held on 4 December and 9 January and were facilitated by committee members. While in-person meetings have been discontinued, the Committee continues to meet by videoconference.

The 4 broad options which remain in front of the Strategic planning Cttee are:

1. Stay in the current building by developing a financially sustainable plan to moving forward, which may involve partnership(s) with the community;
2. Move to a location other than 60 Bridge St E (which could have an impact on membership);
3. Amalgamate with another United Church congregation or partner with another church in common space;
4. Walk away from the existing building and disband BSUC. (There was agreement that this should be considered as a last resort)

Although all 4 options remain available for consideration by the Strategic Planning Cttee, as do various combinations of the options, the focus of the Strategic Planning Cttee has been most strongly on the first option.

Since January, there have been 2 major activities for the Committee:

1) The EDGE Initiative. Participation with Bob Richards, the EDGE coach assigned to BSUC, for Phase 1 of EDGE involvement with BSUC, estimated to take 4 months. He has completed a preliminary intake report on BSUC. Committee members and Bob are actively completing broadly-based studies on BSUC , a Viability Assessment (*congregational life and leadership, governance leadership, congregational trends, congregational life and identity, the current BSUC situation, BSUC hopes and dreams*), Financial Review (*generosity, number of identifiable givers, ages of identifiable givers and amount of contribution in 2019, investments/trust funds at year end, building finances [revenue and costs], congregational revenue and cost breakdown*), Property Scan Questionnaire, and Building Condition Assessment (*accessibility features, sustainable energy sources, building floor plan, building usage by congregation, building usage by partners, building usage by tenants, building condition and priority repair, building advantages and constraints*).

These congregational vitality and viability assessments of BSUC will contribute to evidence-based planning among the 4 options above.

2) Analysis of the relevance of BSUC to downtown community social service or faith-based neighbours. The community engagement sessions were planned with this goal. There were 31 representatives of 23 organizations, which have varied downtown footprints in social service, religious, public service, retail and political domains.

There were 3 objectives set for the sessions:

1. To determine whether BSUC is recognized as a serious player in social service provision in Belleville by provider organizations;
2. To determine the conceptual support from provider organizations for possible redeployment/ redevelopment of BSUC physical (and potentially capital) resources; and
3. To determine what support for and what components could be included in a conceptual community resource centre hub, should that decision come a couple of phases down the process road.

The following responses were offered by attendees.

1) The majority of comments on the topic of BSUC being of more assistance to the provider organizations were supportive of physical space

redeployment/redevelopment at 60 Bridge St E. There is consensus as to the valuable location in the downtown near transit, near the client base and near many of the provider organizations. Three representative comments: a) "Bridge Street has space available. Let's use it. It could be a partner in re-development; it could be a tenant; it could be a donor." b) "We have space. Who wants to play?" c) "Affordable housing is not rocket science. You just have to take the lead."

2) The majority of comments were supportive of the creation of an "Under-One-Roof" model of community hub or resource centre. That would involve many relevant individual and family support services and many provider organizations being co-located to facilitate cooperation and coordination among providers. The development of a community hub would include: a) more efficient utilization of funding among organizations (reduced duplication of admin, documentation and program components) and b) more timely coordination of services for clients, many of whom are involved with more than one provider organization.

3) The longer than 20 years that Bridge Street United Church has offered support to the more needful populations in the downtown is recognized by many provider organizations. They are supportive of the ongoing involvement of Bridge Street in the food insecurity and homeless/housing domains, and recognize that Bridge Street has received sufficient funding to continue work in these areas. It is also recognized that Bridge Street United has not been known to "proselytize" during these supportive works, which is also noted to be a necessary position in working with certain of the client populations in the downtown. ("You have not come off as preachy, but we see you living the values.")

Regular briefings will be presented to the congregation as the strategic planning process continues. We remain committed to keeping you informed as we proceed with our work on your behalf. It had been our plan to hold a Congregational Workshop in late April to obtain feedback on some of our preliminary directions. However, with the social distancing protocols in place, it has become necessary to defer this workshop until a future, undetermined date. In the meantime, the Strategic Planning Committee will continue to meet by videoconference. If you have any questions or suggestions, we invite you to get in touch with any of the Committee members.

Members of the Strategic Planning Committee

Gary Hannaford, Chair

Frank Hiebert  
Rev. David King  
Judy McKnight  
Bill Mills  
Susan Pine  
Ian Sutherland

### ***More Information Available...***

A comprehensive summary of the feedback from the community consultation sessions is available by email. Please contact Carol [admin@bridgestreetchurch.com](mailto:admin@bridgestreetchurch.com) for your copy.

### ***In Response...***



Mental wellness experts are cautioning employers to be mindful of the adverse effects that prolonged exposure to COVID-19 related stress can have on employees continuing to work during the pandemic.

As a conscientious employer, BSUC values its staff and is committed to reducing workplace stress associated with this unprecedented time.

To that end, Rev. David is implementing a temporary reduction in the total hours to be worked by each staff, without an impact on compensation.

Effective Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup> all full-time *lay* employees will be responsible to work from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday to Friday. Part time *lay* staff will receive comparable consideration.

Rev. David will be available during these hours and for urgent matters beyond. His contact number is 905-375-7369 or by email [interim.clergy@gmail.com](mailto:interim.clergy@gmail.com)

It is recognized that this change may result in a measure of inconvenience for some individuals. Regrets are pro-offered.

This provision remains subject to unannounced change or withdraw as necessitated by operational demands.

***A Word of Thanks  
... to our Staff and Volunteers***



At this time of disruption and uncertainty it is wonderful to know that our church staff - Rev. David, Carol, Mitchell, Steve, and Rob - have continued to work on our behalf, nevertheless observing all the mandated pandemic protocols. We are deeply appreciative of your efforts!

And to the volunteers who have stepped up to either prepare or serve meals, we are truly grateful. Likewise, to our community partners (Gleaners Food Bank, the Salvation Army, Quinte Development Council, Enrichment Centre For Mental Health, et. al.) thank you for seeing us as adding value to the immediate response related to COVID-19 and to the longer term planning and policy development that will better position our community in its wholistic response to those experiencing poverty, hunger, and unsheltered living.

