

# Ministers' Musings

We hear a lot of questions .... here are some answers

## Why?? Who?? When?? Where?? How?? And??

We continue to hear questions about the future of the buildings on both the South Burnaby and West Burnaby sites. This edition of Ministers' Musings is our way of answering the questions you have voiced. We are not trying to "snow" you or to misrepresent this information as we know it. We hope this will assist you in your ongoing contemplations about the future of United Church of Canada ministry in the South Slopes and Metrotown. Please keep in mind that our churches are not just ours. We are called to be the church, the embodiment of the gospel of grace, for all our neighbours and for the world. God has entrusted us with these ministries that we might indeed be God's grace-filled presence for others.

**Why???** are we building a new church when we have a perfectly good building here at South?

**Because for many years** there has been a vision that the United Church of Canada be physically present in both the South Slopes and the Metrotown areas. We maintain that to relinquish either site to other enterprises at this time would be to abandon the ministry opportunities emerging now and into the future. Our forbearers knew that once a site is relinquished it is exceptionally difficult and costly to get it back. There is no question that, as one congregation, revitalizing ministries in and for both locations will give more of our surrounding neighbours access to vital grace-filled experiences. We can't imagine not being present across the wider area when we have the opportunity, the resources, and God's call to us to be present.

The buildings at South are not "perfectly good." In the next decade, important work will need to be done on the site to keep it safe and functional. Currently, the buildings, particularly the hall, are not handicap accessible. The ramp on the North side of the hall is inadequate at best, despite the diligent and faithful efforts of the Stewards and the Custodian to keep it in safe, working order. In the building that houses the sanctuary, there is only one accessible washroom. There is now, before and after worship, a significant line-up of people every Sunday who really need that washroom. The wait time is often intolerable.

There are **no secret plans** to tear down the Rumble site buildings. There is absolutely **no plan to do so**. The South Burnaby congregation at the February 2016 Annual Congregational Meeting did give substantial support for the exploration of the use of these particular buildings. The report from that meeting says, **"In order to embody the vision more fully, an exploration begin immediately of possible re-designs and renovation of the buildings and use of the property based on the implementation of the four priorities for ministry (worship, belonging, service, learning). On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is full support: 71% of respondents support at a level of 7 and above. 86% of respondents support at a level of 5 and above."**

Presently, the buildings are as functional as they are because of the skill and resourcefulness of many under the leadership of the Stewards. There is little question in our minds that these buildings will become less efficient and therefore less functional. Too many people will simply not be able to get in.

**Who???** made the decision to keep going with the development of the Sussex site?

**The Board** of West Burnaby United Church made the original decision to go ahead with the development. From the very beginning there have been members of South Burnaby United Church on the development team taking information back to the South Burnaby congregation as appropriate. Once an agreement had been reached with the developer in November 2014, a congregational meeting of West Burnaby United was held where they officially voted to approve it. On the same day, South Burnaby United voted in favour of supporting the decision of West Burnaby and since then, the process has not slowed down.

**When???** is it going to be finished?

**The development process** has always and will continue to work according to a timeline in order to meet targeted goals and thresholds. Unfortunately, some targets have not been reached due to no fault of Townline, the Developer. They have continued to be diligent in their work, pushing forward at the right intervals even while waiting for other key parties to complete their work. The City of Burnaby, amid the large number of construction projects, is working through their stages and steps as well. Demolition is projected to be in mid-2017.

**Where???** will we worship now and in the future?

**Currently** we are all worshipping at the Rumble Site. The Sussex site has been vacated of furniture and the site is often used as a TV filming location. Rev. Graham tries to be in the church office on Sussex at least 3 days a week.

As the development comes closer to completion, we will make decisions together about the most effective uses of both sites for the mission and ministry of the congregation most effectively. Though far too many people are making assumptions about the location of Sunday worship, we assure you that there has been **no decision** to worship only at the Sussex site or at the Rumble site and it is clearly premature to make decisions about that until the development is near completion.

**How???** is this development project being funded?

**Neither of the founding congregations** (West or South) has paid any money towards the building of a new church. Not one cent from either budget has funded this development. Thanks to BC Conference Property Resource Team funding the project up front, we have not paid out any monies toward the project. The agreement made with Townline back in 2014 benefits the congregation \$6.8 million. The cost to build the church itself through the design phase comes to approximately \$5.5 million. A cash payment of \$1.2 million is to be forwarded to the newly amalgamated congregation in the spring of 2017.

Further, when the development is complete, BC Conference (Administrative) Office will be a partner in the building paying a good portion of the costs of running the building. This agreement has not yet been finalized.

**And???** what about the many other administrative details?

**As you can imagine**, there are a million and one moving parts that we are attempting to fit together so that the new congregation can move into our ministry joyfully and effectively. We are alert to which of those parts are most essential and in what order of priority they need to be assembled and adjusted. Sometimes we get pieces out of order or even drop them. Of one thing we are confident. Before the end of January 2017 the congregation will, at an official congregational meeting, vote on key pieces such as the Transitional Council, Trustees, and Ministry & Personnel, as well as a recommendation regarding the Minister for the new congregation. **Please keep praying for us.** Together with you we are working diligently and we are grateful for the privilege to serve the cause of Christ with you. We are excited about the new congregation's future ministry all the way from the South Slopes to Metrotown!

**Thanks for reading ~ Revs. Graham and Jay**