

June 2023 Letter from Carol Gray, Chair Trinity Annan Board

(reading time is 5 minutes. Time for pondering is much more.)

Dear Friends,

Thank you for recommitting your leadership to the Trinity Board. Your contribution is always valuable, especially as we debate, dialogue, and discern the future of our cherished little church on the hill.

2023 will be a year of experiments and experiences to help us inform our choices and create opportunities for partnerships, alliances, and relationships. With the improved transparency of our fiscal situation, we know that the status quo is not long-term sustainable. However, we are fortunate that we have Bill's expertise, sufficient discretionary financial resources, and your combined talents that give us some measured time with thoughtful input to evaluate options. In broad terms, here is a path for the next three years.

2023: Inclusive experiments of ways to express our faith while retaining the fellowship and caring vital to Trinity's culture.

This is a journey of discovery as we open our minds to new ideas and ways of partnering with other churches. Along the way, we will establish new relationships and appreciate the gifts we have to offer other congregations who share similar situations as Trinity. We are part of a larger community of faiths, and what is our responsibility to contribute? Sharing and caring have always been a part of Trinity's ethos, and as we pay attention during our discovery journey, I'm confident our future will be revealed.

2024: Develop a way of worshiping that is resilient.

With the collective knowledge gained from learning together during 2023, we'll develop a way of worshiping that promotes our natural advantages; online technology, rural heritage, and active retired service-oriented congregation. We'll implement the necessary changes that acknowledge our constraints; few ministers willing to locate to single-point rural churches, Bill's retirement in 2026, an aging congregation, dwindling numbers, and finite financial resources.

2025: Implement and fine-tune our plan.

The changes we implement in 2024 will not be the only things we accomplish. There will always be opportunities to learn more and adjust accordingly. I look forward to our ongoing progressive thinking as we remain a vital church for our Community of Faith.

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My term as Chair won't cover this three-year outlook; however, I am committed to helping set us on a path that contributes to our larger community and sees a successful outcome for our Community of Faith. Thank you for your leadership in shaping our future.

Now, focusing on 2023, what are the experiments we have experienced thus far:

Theological Banquet; We learned more about how we live our faith with the workshops. Most of us are Ecclesial, with some Missional, Ecumenical, and Spiritual expressions of faith. We greatly value our church, fellowship, and routines. Our shadow is we don't benefit from the gifts of the Evangelical.

Grey Bruce Churches; A group of lay leaders from other churches are trying to solve many of the same issues we are experiencing. Please see their Facebook page for the ongoing dialogue about what other churches in our community are doing. (search Facebook for Grey Bruce Churches) All are welcome to attend meetings and contribute. We are all experimenting.

Central Westside United Church; We tested the technology for sharing a live stream service with CWUC on April 30 (they hosted) and May 28 (we hosted). What was your reaction?

In May, we received a letter from them requesting we consider sharing Bill's time. They have been without a minister for 18 months. I have asked their Chair to outline their objectives and success factors for a partnership. I have heard from many of you that it would be premature to enter into an alliance with CWUC before we consider other alternatives. I agree. This year we are experimenting to inform our choices; next year, we will develop a resilient plan. I will meet with CWUC's Chair, Anne Otterbein, in June, and we will discuss mutually beneficial ways of support. I welcome any of you to join me. Please let me know of your interest.

We changed our worship time to 10:30 am. We made this change to be more accessible to sharing worship time with other churches. What's your reaction? We may decide to change again, depending upon the input of our experiments. We are building our collective flexibility muscle.

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What's next for 2023?

What experiments are we planning for the remainder of this year?

Pride Parade June 17.

This annual event is an opportunity to share an experience with a broad group of United Church and other folks who are expressing their faith. We will learn more about our neighbors. Please plan to attend.

Collaboration Workshop June 19. Hosted by Georgian Shores UC, a large group of United Church laypeople will discuss ideas for partnership models, what's worked, what resources are available, and what's under consideration. I encourage you to attend so that we may broaden our network and thinking. Please see Sunday's bulletin for more details.

Church Hub; On July 16 and 23, we'll rent Southampton UC's technology for worshipping while Bill is on vacation. This may be the technology of the future church, and we want it to be as interactive as possible to achieve a realistic outcome. Please plan to attend in person on these Sundays and encourage others to attend.

Making your Church Building a Community Asset. This 5 module program promises to deliver practical advice and insights on purposing church buildings for the future. Please plan to attend any or all of the modules. Bill will host them onsite July 2 and 9 after the service coffee time, July 4 and 11 from 5:00-7:30 pm to eat together, watch the videos and discuss.

What else for 2023? What are other things we can do to extend our reach, relationships, and horizons that would contribute to our resilient plan for our vital church? Please plan to attend Soup Sunday on June 11 for a lively discussion.

I apologize for the length of this letter, and thanks for taking the time to read and consider the content. I look forward to seeing you at church and wish you safe travels for your summer vacation.

Warm regards and blessings,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Carol", written in a cursive, flowing style.