

Wolfville United Baptist Church has a long and distinguished history, as the oldest continuing Baptist church in Canada, and has, in the past, been an example of a consistent, inclusive and visionary Christian presence.

The church was born in a period of spiritual revival and growth, in which the celebrated “apostle of Nova Scotia”, Henry Aline, was prominent alongside Ebenezer Moulton and Nicholas Pierson, and a group of ten Baptists, including people with well-known names like Benjamin Kinsman and Peter Bishop, in establishing the Church. Initially, its ministry and its pastoral outreach ranged from Hantsport in the East to Nictaux in the West. As time passed, this ministry gave rise to other new churches. Beginning as something of a blend of Congregationalist and Baptist witness, it functioned without a building, for a time, but with the addition of baptisms and new members, the need for a Meeting House was recognized. The story of the late 18th and 19th century was exciting, and during the ministry of Thomas Higgins, who, like his predecessor, was an evangelist as well as a preacher, he baptized 312 people in less than 11 years of ministry.

The present building was erected in 1912 at a cost of \$39,000, and dedicated to the worship of God and the service of mankind”. It has served us well, and although the building continues to be well maintained by the Board of Trustees, and various discussions have taken place concerning development and/or expansion in later ministries, including those of Dr. Herman Olsen, Rev. Austin MacPherson and Rev. Ralph Wilton, with only the minor restructuring of the interior, we believe the time has come to move beyond discussion to development and expansion.

For some years, we have been engaged in long-range planning as a church. That whole process has been guided by the Church’s Mission Statement, which follows the early church in giving priority to worship; to sharing the good news of Christ through personal witness, evangelism and missionary outreach; to providing life-long instruction and learning; to achieving spiritual growth in the context of fellowship; and to serving Christ and human needs in the church, the community and the world. That has been our driving vision.

In a Deacons’ Board document in May 2000, it was stated that “it is imperative that we have and advance a clear vision of how to move forward in the implementation and growth of the ministries of the church, as defined by the presentation of the Long range Planning Committee in January 1999, which are now the agreed priority areas of activity we share in the work of Christ and His Church”.

These are:

- The Church’s Teaching Ministry;
- The Church’s Social Service and Social Action Ministries;
- The Church’s Evangelistic Ministry;
- The Church’s Youth Ministry;
- The Church’s Welcoming Ministry, in the Encouragement and Incorporation of New People into the life of the church.

It is encouraging to see how some of these have been, and are being actively pursued already, through the work of our Worship Resource Committee, the use of Alpha as an outreach of our church, the development and enhancement of our teaching and nurturing ministries, the enrichment of fellowship through such activities as the Wednesday suppers, the Art classes and the recent Seniors’ Fitness programme and the ministries of community

concern, both through the Friendship & Resource Centre, and through making our facilities available to appropriate community activities.

Seeking the Will of God

Now, as the Board of Trustees and the Long Range Planning Committee, in consultation with the Boards of Deacons and Finance, have met together to seek the will of God for the future witness of the church, we have come to the clear conviction that the time has come to clarify our vision, and to let that vision determine the nature and the extent of the venture to which we feel God is calling us.

We are grateful to Mrs. Marjorie Dowe for her bold and imaginative challenge to the church meeting in November, which has led to the preparations for this meeting tonight.

Following the Will of God

In full awareness that we are committed, as a church, to the development of our Teaching Ministry, our Social Service and Action Ministries, our Evangelistic Ministry, our Youth Ministry, and to the encouragement and incorporation of new people in the life of the church, and to the development of special areas of ministry within and through our membership, such as Seniors' Ministry, we now recommend to the church that we commit ourselves to the achievement of visionary development and expansion goals, which we believe to be necessary, in order to develop these ministries further, and to make them more effective in the longer term.

Doing the Will of God

In the light of our review of priorities already established by the church three years ago, the needs identified by existing ministries within the church, and the large vision they represent, **we recommend:**

That we commit ourselves to plan and to implement such building expansion and integration of facilities as will enable the church to fulfil its mission more adequately. This will mean the improvement of our present facilities, and the added provision or upgrading of:

- a) Educational space, for Sunday School, Bible Study and Christian nurture programs of various kinds.
- b) Fellowship space, for activities dedicated to the church's communal activities, church suppers, etc.
- c) Kitchen space, which needs to be made much more adequate for the multiple needs of the church's ministries.
- d) Recreational space, allowing for youth ministries, games of various kinds, perhaps in the form of gymnasium space. This may be blended with the Fellowship space, and made capable of multi-purpose use.
- e) Nursery space, to accommodate babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers
- f) Space for appropriate Seniors' ministry and activities;
- g) Space for community ministries, such as the Fellowship and Resource Centre, allowing for appropriate ministries to needs in the community;
- h) Space for the Music Ministries, including space for Choir meeting, rehearsal and storage of equipment, such as gowns, books, musical scores, etc.;
- i) A Resource Room;
- j) Library space;
- k) Storage space;

- l) Space/Rooms for Community functions, and organizations, as part of our serving ministry;
- m) Multiple meeting places;
- n) Accessibility to main entry points of our buildings for all, regardless of the physical condition of persons entering them;
- o) Sufficient Parking spaces to meet the needs of enlarged buildings.

This, if the church endorses it now, will become a major task, in the interests of keeping the church moving forward with the highest degree of unity and commitment that we can achieve. It will involve major fund-raising and unprecedented costs, but it is our united conviction that our vision must determine our budget, and not the reverse.

A sub-committee of the Board of Finance is discussing ways and means of developing and establishing a financial plan for the Church, including the funding of possible expansion.

While we are asking you tonight to approve this development proposal, and to authorize the action necessary to implement this vision, **we also recommend:**

That, before any ground-breaking work is begun, plans will have been drawn, cost estimates secured, and fund-raising strategies presented, and subjected to the endorsement of a church meeting.

Goal for Expansion

We have explored directly and thoroughly the availability of the Irving land adjacent to the church on Main Street, and are satisfied that it is not available to us. Therefore, the development we wish to explore will be designed, so as to provide linkage with the present building, appropriate access for all, and building and parking development on the adjacent land on Highland Avenue, which is owned by the church.

We already have very interesting and helpful architectural plans to guide our thinking, which were prepared when such a vision was presented during the ministry of Rev. Ralph Wilton, although their location would probably be somewhat altered from the original concept, and their design, internal and external, would be determined to conform to the church building and to the immediate neighbourhood.

We do not believe there is any legitimate reason for failing to commit ourselves to the fulfilment of this vision. If, as we believe, it is consistent with the will of God and the Mission Statement of the Church, the financial needs will be met. Our neighbouring churches in Port Williams, New Minas, Alton, Cambridge, Centreville and Middleton have all enhanced their ministries by similar means. Now, we believe, the "mother church" of the area, Wolfville Baptist, which is enjoying considerable internal growth and development, is being called to another stage of venture in its long and distinguished story.

Respectfully submitted,
Board of Trustees
Long-Range Planning Committee.