

REMARKS TO CONGREGATION REGARDING CLOSURE OF SANCTUARY

Sunday, June 8, 2008

Members and Adherents of Knox-St. Paul's United Church

As members and adherents of Knox-St. Paul's United Church we have had our fair share of turmoil and upset over the past couple of years. With the love and care of our dear Lord, the good guidance of our Trustees, our Church Council and our Church staff we have met the challenges that we have faced and are moving forward. Today it is my task to report to you, what is without a doubt, our greatest challenge to date. I would like to begin by giving you some background information

Late last week the Trustees received a Report from The Thompson Rosemount Group about the conditions and structure of the Church. As many of you know, Thompson Rosemount have been monitoring the ongoing movement of our church walls for the past twenty plus years. The latest report from the professional engineers of Thompson Rosemount stated that evidence of ongoing movement of the church building is a serious concern and that there may be concealed conditions within the walls, roofs and/or foundation that could be inadequate or unstable. Although the periodic inspections reveal minor comparative movement, the cumulative movement over an extended period of time is significant. This instability coupled with the fact that Cornwall is located in a known earthquake zone has led the Thompson Rosemount Group to state that the portion of the building that has been monitored (Nave, Narthex and associated areas) **is unsafe and should not be occupied.** The report further stated that The Thompson Rosemount Group absolved themselves of any liability regarding the areas of Knox-St. Paul's United Church noted in the report.

Subsequent to the receipt of this report, the Trustees held a meeting Monday afternoon, June 2, of this week with professional engineers from Thompson Rosemount Group in attendance. This meeting was followed Monday evening, June 2, by a meeting of the Chairs of the Committees of Knox-St. Paul's Council, the Trustees and the 2010 Committee.

At the Monday evening meeting, after vigorous discussion, the following decisions were made:

1. Effective, Monday June 9, 2008, the Narthex, Nave, Sanctuary and St. Paul's Hall will be closed off until further notice.
2. An inquiry will be made to see if we can hold our church services at Central Public School for an indefinite period of time
3. A legal opinion will be sought to address our liability in relation to The Thompson Rosemount Group report.
4. The 2010 project to refurbish the interior of the sanctuary will be put on hold.

On Wednesday, June 4, at noon, a meeting of the Church Council Chairs and Trustees was held. At this meeting information regarding our legal liability was received. This information confirmed that if any legal action arose from falling debris or collapse of the sanctuary, the Church would be liable for such legal actions.

As a result of this information and the results of the inquiry into space availability at Central Public, the following decisions were taken or reaffirmed.

1. Effective, Monday June 9, 2008, the Narthex, Nave, Sanctuary and St. Paul's Hall will be closed off until further notice.
2. Effective, Sunday, June 15, 2008 we will hold our church services at Central Public School for an indefinite period of time. Services will be held in either the library or school gymnasium depending upon anticipated attendance.
3. The Chair of Seaway Valley Presbytery will be notified of our decisions.
4. A press conference will be held on Monday, June 9 at which time our decisions and the rationale for such decisions will be presented.
5. An informal time to dialogue will be held in Lewis Hall on Wednesday, June 11 from 7:00 – 9:00 pm. All are invited and welcome to attend.

There are many more issues related to the closure of the Sanctuary that still need to be addressed. Your Church Council and Trustees, along with Presbytery representatives will be working through these issues and any decisions will be communicated to the congregation in a timely fashion.

We know that this information and these decisions will affect each one of you as we too have been affected. Your prayers, your understanding, your input and most importantly your support will be needed more than ever as we work through this difficult period of time.

I would like to close with the prayer which the Transition committee has adopted:

Let us pray,

Eternal God, you call us to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrod, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us, and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN

We would be happy to entertain a couple of questions at this time.

Peter Morgan,
Council Chair

read by John Irvine at the 10:00am service.