



Introduction

As I write this report I am suddenly aware that it is the last minister's report I will ever write! A momentous event for me. And it causes me to reflect with gratitude and awe over the rich experiences that I have shared with you, not just this year, but through almost 9 years (by the end of June, 2006) of ministry with you. Who could have believed that we would have come this far together way back when Bob Fraser tried to coax me out of my counselling office to come and do weekend preaching while you looked for a minister? Thank you for offering me the chance to renew my identity as a parish minister, and for the love and support which I have felt from all of you as we journeyed together in faith. Thank you also for those brave souls who were willing to explore with me in our discussion groups the "frontiers of faith" as together we tried to give shape and form to the working of the Divine in our present time and place. I move into retirement feeling blessed by our shared ministry.

This has also been a momentous year in the life of our congregation! St. Paul's, St. Andrew's and Zion congregations have merged to become the new congregation of Trillium United Church. We've accomplished a lot. And we've really just begun!

The "Courtship" Months

As the minister of St. Paul's and the supervising pastor for Zion and St. Andrew's I have been very involved in your activities in both the *before* and the *after* phases of this amalgamation. The year began with a report to all three congregations by the Visioning Task Group, made up of representatives from each congregation. This group proposed that we undertake a series of 'together experiences' which might give us a sense of how well we could interact and cooperate with each other. They also proposed the end of April as a 'decision time' about whether or not we should proceed to amalgamation of our three congregations.

All three congregations agreed to the proposal. February and March were busy months of joint meetings, worship services, and many public as well as behind-the-scenes discussions. We discovered that many of us already knew people from the other congregations, and that much of what we were doing individually was also recognized by the other congregations as an important part of their ministry too. It wasn't all smooth-sailing, but, in the end, each congregation chose togetherness as the road to our future. May and June were spent finishing up the remaining aspects of individual congregational life and work, and exploring together how to merge the important elements of who each of us were into what all of us would become.

We chose a new name. And what a name! Unique to us, and emerging not from location or tradition, but from a dream message of one of our members. Could it still be true that "your sons and daughters will proclaim God's message; your young will see visions and your old will have dreams"? (Acts 2:17) "*Trillium United*" – symbolic of 3 in 1, blossoming, Springtime harbinger of hope and renewed life.

Six Months as Trillium

On July 3rd, 2006, we officially became one congregation. We had celebrated our separate identities and the history and dedication that were all tied up in who we had each been. We had bid farewell to Ruth Cooke as she continued on her journey into full-time ministry. We alternated worship through the summer in our three different 'campuses'. Together we decided that we should regularize our Sunday worship in the St. Paul's facility while a task group explored the question of how our facilities and our future could best be addressed.

It has been a busy Fall! Programs needed to be integrated, UCW reorganized, furnishings and memorials integrated, committees merged, and there was an overwhelming amount of administrative detail to be sorted through and unified. We found appropriate tenants and made contractual arrangements with them for the rental of our unused facilities. A Needs Assessment Committee has been established to determine how our new identity and mission as a congregation defines the kind of leadership that is needed to take Trillium into the future.

I have been moved by the openness to the Spirit that you have shown as we have struggled through the emotional decisions leading up to amalgamation. And I have been inspired by the sense of peace and goodwill that has surrounded our common efforts to forge a faithful and energized new congregation out of the rich heritage of our 3 founding churches. The dedication of a few (you know who you are!) who have been willing to take on more than their share of responsibility to make it happen (often without any fanfare or awareness by the larger congregation) makes me humbly grateful.

Above all, I want to express my deep respect and appreciation for the dedication and hard work of Karen Steenson, our Church Administrator. Her attention to detail, her generosity of spirit, and her ability to deal with people have enabled the complexities of the merger to happen in a way that kept ruffled feathers to a minimum and has resulted in everyone feeling that their needs and concerns were accommodated. Without her skill and grace we could not have achieved so smooth a transition into Trillium United Church.

This has been one of the best staff teams that I have ever worked with in my career as a pastoral minister, and I will miss my weekly work sessions with Neil, the adjustments to furnishings and sanctuary decorations (and occasional lunches) with David, and the day-to-day interchanges with Karen. Niki and I had less encounters, but I enjoyed our mutual leadership in youth activities like F.R.O.G nights, and wish her well in her new career as a teacher. And, although she is not a *paid* staff member, I also want to pay tribute to Pam Ditner whose deep commitment to this congregation and its ministry has made possible so much of what the rest of us take for granted. I have valued her strategic-planning partnership over the years I have been your minister.

The future of Trillium United Church does not depend primarily on your choice for a new minister (although that will obviously have an impact). The key to the ongoing health and viability of this congregation will be mostly determined by the leadership and energy of those who emerge from among you to take up the task of running a church. Lay leadership remains the greatest challenge and the most critical issue that Trillium congregation faces. The kind of ministry that Trillium United Church can exercise in this community depends upon you. May God's Spirit be strong in your midst!