



**“Growing Together”  
A Conversation About the Possible Amalgamation  
of Gordon, Knox and St. Aidan’s Presbyterian Churches**

**“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” Jeremiah 29:11  
NRSV**

December 9, 2020

Dear Friends,

We are writing to advise you of a number of important developments in the life of our church, relating to a potential amalgamation of Gordon, Knox, and St. Aidan’s congregations. We would like to make all our people aware of these and commend them to your attention. The Sessions and others who have been part of the conversations are excited and inspired by the ideas that have emerged as we have gotten to know one another and developed friendships and trust.

**Why Amalgamate the Churches?** By way of background, we recognize that our congregations offer our people the experiences of Christian community, the vitality of an encounter with God in Jesus Christ and a deeper sense of meaning in the midst of life. Our separate lives of worship and service have sustained us; we also discover the shared reality of worship together to be inspiring and enlivening. A second, and undeniable, side of our stories is that our congregations are declining, that we sometimes struggle to provide sufficient resources of energy and ability, that finances are a concern and that our facilities are aging (as are we) and so demand maintenance and repair in ways that might be very costly. We agree that without responding to these factors in a significantly different way than we have done thus far, our runway is short. We foresee that, apart from creating a different future, we might have about five years before having to face the closure of our congregations.

**Who is Involved?** Since 2018, Sessions and others from the congregations of Gordon, Knox, St. Aidan’s and Brentwood have been gathering to discuss their current contexts and ways to collaborate in order to support and increase the vitality of their ministries. As time has passed, a new conversation has arisen which encompasses and expands upon that earlier one. Knox, St. Aidan’s and Gordon have shifted from a focus on collaborating and sharing to an exploration of growing together into one new congregation. We are actively wondering together what this would look like and how it could come about.

In the summer, the Sessions of our three Churches met together and created a working group with the task of proposing a plan for amalgamation according to

the Presbyterian Church in Canada's (PCC) Policy on the Amalgamation and Dissolution of Congregations ("the Policy").

Three representatives of each congregation have met weekly with the Rev. Bruce Cairnie, who is facilitating the process. Knox is represented by Judy Sinclair, Antonia Reynolds and Gareth Youdan. Laurie Deacon, Eileen Sparrow and Angus Beattie represent St. Aidan's and Ian Rokeby, Cal MacLeod and Jim McQueen are Gordon's participants.

**What Has Been Achieved So Far?** The Working Group presented an interim report to the Sessions on November 17, outlining the progress to date. That report was received very positively. The group has begun to identify a path that could lead to amalgamation. It is important that each of us become informed on this work and prayerfully seek God's guidance on this matter. We emphasize that no decisions have been made that commit any of the congregations to amalgamation.

The Sessions, meeting together, agreed on a number of resolutions that are important to share with you:

1. The vision of this new congregation must be defined; a process of discerning a vision is crucial for how any amalgamation will embody God's mission in the life of our congregation and wider neighbourhood. The steps for the process will be announced soon and your participation will be essential.
2. Without knowing the specifics, the new congregation will be actively engaged in its community through a variety of outreach programs.
3. The Sessions of the present congregations will become one new Session; all elders currently serving may continue to serve.
4. Doubtless a future under amalgamation will bring changes in our staffing needs; the people filling various pastoral and other staff positions will be treated with love and respect through this process.
5. Pastoral care of our current congregations is highly important, especially as opportunities to listen to peoples' dreams and anxieties about what amalgamation might mean.
6. At the request of the Sessions, the Presbytery has named the Rev. Bruce Cairnie as Interim-Moderator of all three Sessions in relation to possible amalgamation. This creates continuity for the Sessions and provides a formal structure for communicating with the presbytery.
7. News about the progress made thus far will be made available in a number of different forms (e.g. Phone calls, mail, email).

**Suggested Timeline:** While the Working Group on Amalgamation has further work to do, the following general timeline could be possible should the congregations eventually amalgamate:



| <b>Date</b>       | <b>Milestone</b>                      | <b>Approval by</b>      |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Nov 2020          | Interim Report                        | Sessions                |
| Quarter 1, 2021   | Completion of draft Amalgamation Plan | Sessions, Congregations |
| Quarter 2, 2021   | Amalgamation Plan Approval            | Presbytery              |
| Quarter 3-4, 2021 | Amalgamation Plan Approval            | General Assembly        |
| January 2022      | Amalgamation Plan Implementation      | Sessions, Presbytery    |

This brief letter is intended to inform you of the specifics and status of this process. We anticipate that many of you will have questions and input to be addressed, and that this will strengthen this initiative. More information will be available soon at our new website (address to be announced), and there will be other opportunities to ask questions, discuss the details, and become informed. Your participation in the visioning process will be invited and is essential! We will advise as soon as this is set up. We would urge you to become informed and reach out to your elder or minister with questions or comments.

In Christ,

Session of Gordon Presbyterian Church