

“...for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ...There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:26,28)

Friends, greetings in the name of the one who binds us together. With this letter you will find the results of the questionnaire that the TAMBO group asked you to complete in May. We asked you to prayerfully consider the questions and respond with your truth, and you did. Thank you.

As the consultant assisting the TAMBO committee I was moved by your responses. I know you a bit, but not well enough to even vaguely imagine who wrote what. I read the responses then, not as from individuals but as many voices speaking from one body, the congregation of Peninsula United Church. What I read moved me to tears, and I am not one often touched in such a way.

In your responses to the questions the passion for your faith, and your clarity about your mission come through loud and clear. I was struck by the poignancy and beauty of how you articulated what you are missing; how you made clear what matters to you. You testified regarding what is precious to you about the church, and about the role of the church in the world. Your responses offered a stunning witness to what it means to be the people of the Word.

When I got to the responses to what is concerning you, I felt the energy drain out of my body. There was a miasma, a cloud that arose from the concern about some people not feeling united, not feeling connected, not feeling yet as part of one body. Some feel as if they do not yet belong, others feel a fatigue of being rebuffed in their efforts to include, to engage, to build community. If the concern about not yet feeling as one drained my energy, I can only imagine how it impacts your life together. There was a palpable shift in energy, joy, heart, and community when I read the responses to the questions about what worries you.

It occurred to me that some of your concerns, although located specifically in the congregation, are actually a reflection of what former Moderator, The Very Rev. Peter Short refers to as ‘the humiliation of the church.’ It’s not news to you that we are living through the dissolution of the church, the decline in every measurable aspect of what we once knew. That can’t help but be troubling, even if we don’t acknowledge it. Perhaps some of the despondency is actually connected to the bigger picture, the endings of what we have known, and this disappointment and discouragement can be heightened if the particular congregation we are a part of no longer seems like what we are used to. The good news is that this is not unique to Peninsula United. The even better news is that you have resources in staffing, membership, and property, to be

able to be part of whatever new thing God is up to. Your work, it seems to me, is to continue to do what you are already about, what gives you joy, AND, to consider how to come to love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Just as the people Paul wrote to, neither Jews, nor Gentiles, neither slave nor free, neither from Crescent, nor Sunnyside, nor First, nor elsewhere, but one in Christ, worshipping and serving at Peninsula United Church.

You have some hard decisions before you regarding properties and places of worship. My prayer for you is that you can together set your eyes on Christ and Christ's call to service, letting go of what is holding you back and being carried into God's new thing.

We will be exploring these topics on July 26, 2020 and two additional Sundays in August.

"That All May Be One" requires all of our participation, wisdom and attention.

We encourage you to join the Sunday Coffee Hour following worship for TAMBO discussions.

Blessings along the way,

Debra Bowman

TAMBO July 2020