

Care of the Church Property

The Trinity United Church Council at their meeting of January 31, 2019 received this proposal from the Trustees and recommend it for discussion/decision at the Annual Meeting.

Background:

- As churches face changing times, many pastoral charges are seeking ways to engage the community around them and find ways to “keep the church open for more than one hour a week.” By sharing space with the Love and Learn Daycare, Trinity is serving the community and benefitting financially. This is good ministry practice, but it also means there are 50 or more people using the building six days a week and this means repair and maintenance is needed on a regular basis.
- Communities of faith are aging. There was a time when the young men of the congregation had the skills and knowledge to care for the property by making repairs, painting, and working on building projects. This is no longer the case and it is true in churches, large or small.
- In former days, there were more people to share the load of governance. Often churches had a Board of Managers who had sole responsibility for the care of the property. The demographics of Trinity (and most churches) have changed over the years. There aren’t enough people to fill all the roles. As I understand it, in Trinity’s history the care of property fell into a shared responsibility between the stewards and the trustees. This was unwieldy at best, in terms of making decisions and ensuring on-going and plans and care for the property.
- While repair and maintenance is not technically the responsibility of the Trustees, it is now their responsibility. A church is required by *The United Church Manual* to have a Board of Trustees. Trinity does. This is good! There is no chair. This is not so good. Without a chair, meetings are not called and there is a gap in our capacity to plan, research and implement new and needed projects and maintain a schedule of regular work. The Manual allows for the minister to fill this role when there is no chair. At present, the minister serves as chair. This may be helpful in the immediate, but it is not a long-term solution or the best use of part-time ministry hours.
- Trinity has a care of the building that is deeply admirable. Many churches focus on survival and allow the building to fall into disrepair and let necessary projects slide. Trinity is committed to including funds in the budget for property maintenance. Trinity cares about their building.
- While there is clear process for dealing with building emergencies, there is less clarity about how small repairs/maintenance is done and no system for doing more than talk about new projects. This leads often to misunderstanding and conflict based on possibly inaccurate assumptions.

- Trinity is fortunate to have one or two people who know the building inside and out. This is an onerous burden (from my perspective) on a few, and leaves Trinity in jeopardy of not knowing what to do or how to care for things in the future. It may be wise to implement a plan now while there is knowledge to mentor others.

A Proposal for Conversation

That Trinity engage a Building Manager on a monthly retainer of \$200 (based on 8 hours a month; hours flexible from one month to another) to do tasks, such as the following:

- Insure there are people engaged for seasonal work, such as snow removal, grass cutting, steps/ramp clearing and to troubleshoot any emerging issues around seasonal workers.
- Set up a regular schedule of building maintenance (servicing the furnace, fire extinguishers, photocopier etc.) and be present when service people are visiting, letting them into the building, getting information, signing invoices, and reporting on their visit.
- Check the building after storms to ensure safe access and check for any damage.
- Set up the yearly check of the natural gas inspection and check the clearing of ice and snow from the meter.
- Work with the Director of the Daycare when issues arise or at times when jobbers are called to the church in an emergency.
- Address simple plumbing, electrical, painting or repair work as needed.
- Help implement the priorities set by the congregation and trustees by gathering information, estimates, and making contact with tradespeople.
- Report regularly to the chair of the Trustees or his/her designate on any concerns or work that is needed.

NOTE: This isn't a formal job description but meant to offer a sense of what work could be done by a building manager in order to fill some of the present gaps.