



ST. DAVID'S
UNITED CHURCH

The Shepherd

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Reflections...

On Sunday, March 4, all active members of St. David's will be invited to vote on our future direction. It will be perhaps the most important vote this congregation has needed to consider in its 55 year history. It is a vote that will determine whether we vigorously meet the challenges of today here at 1525 Taylor Way with creative ministry initiatives, or whether we free-up resources and partner with another local congregation and move to 3255 Edgemont Blvd.



I fully understand that this is an extremely difficult decision. There are a number of us who have poured countless hours deliberating which is the most faithful, practical and promising way forward. We don't all agree. Some read the situation quite differently, but we all hope that --however the congregation decides -- this decision moves us in a direction of renewed life. As long as at least the majority of the congregation supports the decision not only with their vote, but with their life -- with their gifts of money and time -- then *there is no wrong decision*. With the active support of the majority of congregation, we cannot go wrong whether we stay or go.

I continue to be grateful for those who wholeheartedly give themselves to this work of discernment; to those who spend too many hours in too many meetings, who have worked hard on doing research and compiling information, who have had long conversations with many people, who are doing their best for the well-being of the congregation and ministry on the North Shore. I am especially grateful for the intrepid leadership of Emmanuel Huchet who has so generously and ably taken the helm in this challenging time of organizational change, and to Keith Harris-Lowe, a newer member who has offered his skill and experience in Human Resources to help guide the process.

In a time such as this, I hope you become informed. Take time to read through the material you will soon receive. If you have questions, talk to those who were part of the planning groups. In addition to the printed material, we will be offering 10 minute overviews on Sunday morning in February (Feb. 12, 19, 26), and after worship there will be information tables set-up in the Lounge where people will be present to answer questions or have conversation with you. Further, we will have a congregational meeting after worship on February 26th, when you will be able to ask questions that have not yet been resolved for you.

If you are not sure that you are an active member (one who has officially joined the church and contributes to the life of the congregation), please call Leanne in the office. If she can't tell you immediately, we will check our records and get back to you within a working day.

Once again, this is an immensely important, and therefore, emotional decision. In 17 years of ministry, this is without question the most difficult time for me personally. I know it has been and is very hard for many of you as well and I pray that the peace of Christ and the surprising grace of God finds us in this hard place and lifts us into a great flourishing.

I ask that you hold your lay leaders in prayer, if you will. Come to think of it, keep the staff in prayer, too. And when it comes time to vote, I do hope you have the heart and mind and will to follow-through with your vote by supporting St. David's in the months and years to come. Either way, stay or go, change will be upon us and we will need your presence and participation more than ever.

May we come to this decision on March 4 well-informed and filled with a heart of prayer. In the name of the God who goes before us, *always*.

Dan

The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people. Exodus 13:21



From St. David's Board Chair

Your opinion doesn't matter

OK, now that I have your attention, here's what I really mean.



When we offer an opinion it's usually a quick judgment call, often based on surface appearances, of our desired outcome. Giving an opinion is a "passive" act – we sit back and wait for options to present themselves, and then give our preference.

That's not what we want from you. The future of St. David's is at stake, and it requires your full engagement.

In several weeks the congregation will be asked to vote on how we intend to step into the future. This is a critical moment in our history – probably as important as any decision since the church was founded fifty years ago. So it deserves more than just your passive opinion; it needs your active discernment.

Discernment requires effort. It takes work to learn what the options involve, and what the congregation needs to actually DO to make it happen. Discernment is equal parts pragmatism and reflection. It's not good enough to simply express your desires for St. David's.

Don't get me wrong – what we would *like* to see is important. Having a vision is critical to making any decision. But it's not sufficient. We can come up with any number of ideas, wishes and desires for our congregation. In fact we've spent thousands of hours over almost four years doing that, taking stock of our strengths and challenges and exploring ways to change. But there comes a time when you have to stop exploring and start planning. And then there comes a time when you have to stop planning and start *doing*.

For the past few months two planning teams have put in a tremendous amount of time and energy into developing two alternatives for you to consider. In the coming weeks we will offer information sessions and "town hall" discussion forums to give you the opportunity to actively discern everything you can about these two plans. Stay tuned for details but we intend to have several sessions starting mid-February, leading up to the actual vote currently scheduled for Sunday March 4 after the service.

Please take advantage of these opportunities to learn, ask questions, and really understand the implications of both options. We will help you by suggesting criteria and questions to ask yourself as you study the two alternatives. But ultimately it is up to each one of us to make the effort to get the clarity we need to make an informed and spiritually-grounded decision.

We owe it to the folks who have put in so much energy into developing these plans, to those who built St. David's in the first place, and to those who will come after us.

Emmanuel Huchet

Upcoming Vote

Remember: Sunday, March 4th is the date we will have a congregational meeting to vote on the future direction of St. David's. All active members are eligible to vote.

If you're not sure whether or not you are formally an active member, please call the church office at 604-922-3961.

Also, the Board and Planning Teams are working hard to prepare material that is accurate and clear to understand. You should receive information packets via mail or e-mail after February 5th. There will be time for questions and concerns, enthusiasms and hope.



What's Happening...

IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...

If you'd like to take a trip to outer, outer space, come to St. David's to hear Dr. Rob Knop speak on The History and Fate of the Universe. Rob, an almost member of St. David's and regular contributor of music (violin), teaches astro-physics at Quest University in Squamish. Last fall he took a trip to Copenhagen to watch his mentor receive the Nobel Prize in physics on a project Rob helped research. But don't let that scare you. Rob offers popular public presentations for the layperson who is interested in questions such as how the universe began, whether it's expanding, what it means to say the universe is expanding, and where we're going in such a hurry -- complete with pictures! How cool is that? Tuesday February 7th at 7:30 pm in the Sanctuary. See you there.

Musically Speaking:

Choir News: Thank you to all who have been giving their time and voices so generously this past Christmas and New Year. I'm looking forward to sharing together a beautiful selection of music for the upcoming season of Lent and Easter.

New choir members are welcome. No need to bring musical expertise, just a great attitude and a love for music! Please contact Nicole at 778 926 4286.



CELTIC ROOTS
Nicole is organizing a
Celtic Concert for all to enjoy!
March 24th AT 7:30pm
In the Sanctuary
Music, Song & Dance
From the land of the Celts.

Tickets are \$12 per person or \$20 family.
Proceeds in part go to Out of the Cold

Children Youth and Families



We live in a new era in terms of church attendance and viability and it's in partial recognition of this that St. David's is engaged in the most important decision of its history. An indisputable factor in this new reality is that fewer and fewer people are seeking meaning and purpose within the context of organized religion, particularly here on the West Coast. We have seen this reflected in our own Sunday school. Five years ago we had 107 children and youth participating and in 2011 we have 47. A reduction of over 50% in the number of participating children and youth is significant in and of itself. However, of particular concern is that 21 of the 47 children and youth in our programme, are in high school and will be gone in the next couple of years, while at the other end of the age spectrum, we have no children in the nursery and only two very rare participants in the preschool. In fact, just a handful of children under the age of eight. As the time draws close for us to make a choice for the future I encourage you to read the documentation that will be available to you soon, in order to make an informed decision. Blessings as we walk into the future together,

Colleen



The Labyrinth at Rivendell

Upcoming Youth Events

February 3rd

Junior Youth: Youth in grades 4-7 will gather from 4:30-6 and will make the communion bread for worship Feb. 5th. RSVP to colleen@stdavidsunited.com

Senior Youth: High school youth will gather at 6:30 in the Seymour Room. With Bridie's help, we'll make button bracelets. There's a great supply of buttons at St. David's but if you have some favorites, bring them along! RSVP to colleen@stdavidsunited.com

February 17th

Cooking class and dinner together at Colleen's. ***Please be sure to RSVP!***

Junior Youth 4:30-6 Senior Youth 6:30-8:30

February 24th **GODSPELL**



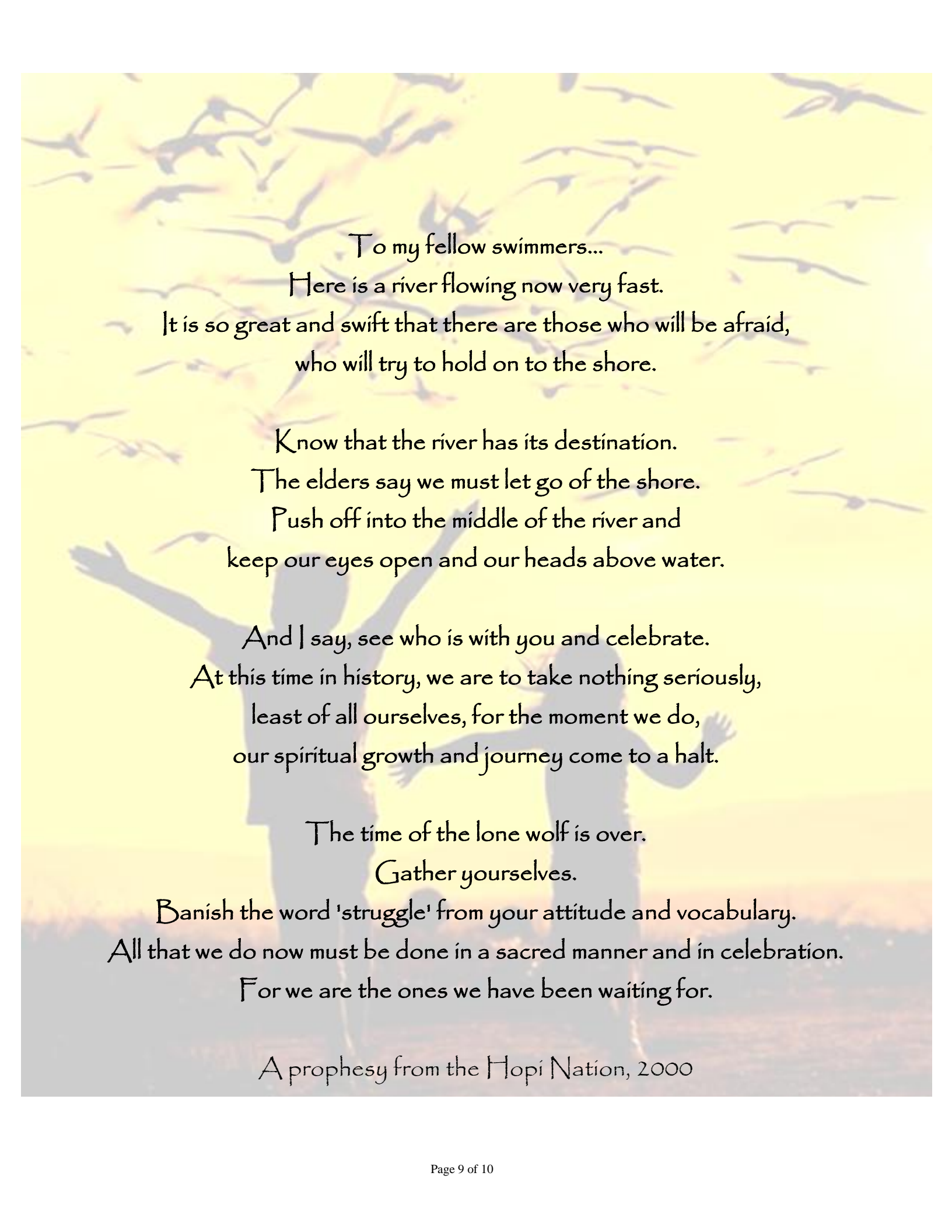
Sr. Youth are invited to the musical "Godspell" at Highlands United Church. RSVP to Colleen to at colleen@stdavidsunited.com and meet at St. David's at 6:45 if you need a ride. See the poster on the landing.

Tickets are \$20.

Thank You....

Christmas seems like a long time ago at this point but my gratitude to all those who helped to make our Advent and Christmas celebrations special, is still heartfelt! On behalf of parents and the congregation as a whole, our deep appreciation to the Sunday school teachers through Advent: Simone Harris-Lowe, Trina Campbell, Joanna Ritson and Sheila Swope. And the Christmas pageant would not be possible without the efforts of people who ironed costumes and parents and youth who dressed children in them, and Alexa D'Orazio and Liam Sturgess who helped the pageant to flow smoothly, along with youth who sang and read in worship.

Our gratitude and appreciation also goes to the children and youth for their outreach efforts throughout the fall and Advent. With the support of the congregation, the youth have provided funds to the Mennonite Central Committee for the construction of two sand dams in Kenya and both the children and youth through their offering during Advent, raised enough money to purchase two goats for a family in Kenya and 4 rabbits for families in Palestine. Blessings to you all!



To my fellow swimmers...
Here is a river flowing now very fast.
It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid,
who will try to hold on to the shore.

Know that the river has its destination.
The elders say we must let go of the shore.
Push off into the middle of the river and
keep our eyes open and our heads above water.

And I say, see who is with you and celebrate.
At this time in history, we are to take nothing seriously,
least of all ourselves, for the moment we do,
our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt.

The time of the lone wolf is over.
Gather yourselves.

Banish the word 'struggle' from your attitude and vocabulary.
All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.
For we are the ones we have been waiting for.

A prophesy from the Hopi Nation, 2000

Outreach

Cold Weather Items:



First United Church

Yes, it's still winter, and imagine the challenges for those who don't have a home or the resources to go out and buy the cold weather gear they need. We invite you to look around your closets and drawers and bring in these clean and usable items and leave them in the large wooden box to the right of the ramp that leads into the lower hall at St. David's:

- Boots
- Long underwear
- Gloves, toques and scarves
- Socks
- Coats and warm outerwear
- Blankets and sleeping bags

Thank you to all who donated to the Out of the Cold outreach during the holidays. Especially Chevron Canada for over 200 pairs of gloves and George and Laurie Beveridge for their large, annual donation of socks.

Everything was appreciated so very much!. It's so very rewarding and St. David's is such a wonderful part of this loving community.

10,000 Villages

Sent a cheque to St. David's for \$173.00 which was donated to the Al-Azaizeh family. This represented a portion of the sales of the November Outreach event held in the Lounge.

Christmas Eve donations

As you likely know, our Christmas Eve open offering was divided among two groups, The North Shore Lookout Shelter and Free the Children.

It is a blessing to be able to send cheques for \$600 to each of these important programs both locally and globally.

