

Kimberley Shared Ministry  
Listening Circles  
Synopsis of What We Heard and Next Steps

As a faith community of Kimberley Shared Ministry, over 60 members participated in Listening Circles and/or individual meetings to tell their story during December 2023. These circles were a chance to share our stories, listen to other people share theirs, and reflect together on our Shared Ministry experience so far.

The Council wishes to thank everyone who participated by talking and listening. Your contributions were vital in gaining an understanding of where we are at right now as a congregation, and what work we need to do together to move forward in a positive way.

All the comments that came out of the 9 Circles and 8 individual meetings have been compiled.. Below is a summary of the stories; the recorded comments are also available to all. Please contact Linda in the office if you wish to see a copy or check the bulletin board.

On January 9, Council discussed these two documents and next steps.

The following is a start to acknowledging people's concerns, to continuing to move forward with our Shared Ministry in a positive way, and to growing into the congregation we wish to be:

- a) Meeting monthly (as opposed to bi monthly) as a council to continue good communication between committees and to assess the current status of the congregation more frequently
- b) Holding a grieving/letting go service/ potluck fellowship for Kimberley United congregants [Jan 13, Rev'd Brent Woodard presiding) ]; all are welcome
- c) Communicating to the congregation that the Synopsis is available and will be sent to everyone though the e-letter, and the recorded comments are available on request from Linda in the office or by looking at the bulletin board. (Jan. 14) ; Sending out the Synopsis!
- d) Training for Personnel Committee that will happen in a two-part process: online in January and further training with Kathy Davies, Pacific Mountain Region, in the spring,
- e) Anti Racism and Harassment training for Council / Personnel Committee with Kathy Davies, Pacific Mountain Region, date undetermined,
- f) Reaching out to individuals who may have had some issues with the Worship services and/or leadership in the past and also, in the present,
- g) Hosting fun fellowship events to build relationships (Soup and Bun: Jan 28; Shrove Tuesday: Feb 13; AGM lunch: Feb 25)
- h) Possibly using the AGM as a place to ask questions about our path forward
- i) Providing a Lenten focus for the congregation to zero in on the qualities we want to promote in our congregational life (e.g. kindness, openness, forgiveness, etc.) and from that, to develop a "community covenant"

If you have other ideas we might all explore, please let us know. Council will also be consulting with Kathy Davies, Pacific Mountain Region and Bishop Lynne McNaughton, and also Andrew Stephens-Rennie, Director of Missional Renewal for the Diocese of Kooenay for their ideas, suggestions and assistance.

### **KSM's Vision**

***With food for the soul and friends for the journey, we serve together in the community and wider world, following the example of Jesus***

#### **1) What resonates with you in the KSM vision?**

The vision -- as a whole and/or its various parts -- certainly resonates with people. Some wondered whether or not we can truly live into the vision (following Jesus), and it was reiterated that we will have to work at this. Two suggestions were made for changing the vision: delete the word "together" and to add the values by which we live out the vision (kindness, welcoming hearts, respect, understanding and patience]

#### **2) In which ways are we moving towards our vision ?**

There were many encouraging comments about the positive effects of having a larger, stronger congregation. A diversity of people learning to come together and sharing the load provides **friends for the journey**. Fellowship time over coffee and at events is seen as a valuable way to create friendships, plan outreach, and share pastoral care needs.

Many comments expressed contentment with the Shared Ministry - noting that while there was apprehension about how the two legacy denominations would meld, it is coming together well, thanks to the hard work of numerous people.

**Food for the soul** is seen as having evolved as we strive to follow in Jesus's footsteps. Reverend Alwin was recognized many times as having worked very hard to provide a balance between denominational practices, and having moved the congregation along the path towards being an ecumenical ministry. Deepening our understanding of the Bible through sermons and book studies has been appreciated.

It was noted how worship services have evolved. Folks appreciate the text on the screens, the carefully crafted shared worship service format, and the music.

Reverend Alwin's hard work and leadership was underscored, as well as the ways he changed to meet the congregation's needs.

#### **3) In which ways are we moving away from our vision ?**

Even though the vast majority of participants felt positive about Reverend Alwin and the shared ministry, there were many comments about how we are moving away from our vision.

Some people are feeling a disconnect; mourning the 'old ways' things were done. Others are worried about our reputation in the community. There were many comments about a lack of communication between committees and the congregation. The need for clarification around where to go with concerns, or a need for information was raised.

In general, although people have embraced the shared ministry, they recognize that change is hard. They feel we are on the right track but it will take time to be completely at ease in this new family.

Food for the soul is an area where people felt very passionate. Many are mourning the loss of our spiritual leader, worrying about worship services going forward, and wondering about pastoral care.

Again, folks felt that there is too much emphasis by some members on United vs Anglican parts in the worship service. Focusing on our service in the wider world and bringing world concerns into the worship service was seen as needing work. Some commented that music is obviously a sticking point, but that the hymns are a challenge for all of us, that will get better as we become familiar with more hymns.

It was mentioned several times that the Message was not resonating for some congregants. It was noted that Reverend Alwin changed to better suit some wishes, but that it was impossible to please everyone. Folks are worried that if people can't get past the need to have their own way, telling the minister how to do things, no other minister will want to come to KSM.

The conflicts that have caused so much harm and sadness were mentioned many times. There are strong views that a small group of people should not be allowed to ruin things for the majority.

#### **4) What insights have you discovered during this process?**

There were a number of insights about the **shared ministry** itself. Many commented that the ideal (being united) is an excellent aspiration and coming together is a continual learning process. Sometimes this is difficult, but by working together, the challenges (such as Alwin's resignation) have the potential to make us stronger. We must **persevere**. One key will be to **better understand each other**, our backgrounds and our core beliefs. We will need to speak the truth. There is a strong desire that EVERYONE be involved in moving forward.

Another key to moving forward will be to consider the **culture and character of our community** -- what it is now, what we want it to be, and what is needed to change ourselves and our habits. Kindness, generosity of spirit, patience, respect for differences, and genuine openness to new ideas or ways of doing things were mentioned as holding us in good stead, especially in times of conflict or crisis. **Worship** is fundamental to our community life:

exploring our shared values around worship (services, sermons, music) could be helpful as well as encouraging patience if worship practices and content don't suit you personally.

**Good communication** will be critical. We need to do better on a number of levels. The shock and confusion about Alwin's resignation partially stemmed from lack of knowledge that there were any problems at all. Examining how to ensure everyone knows what is happening and informing newcomers about opportunities for involvement in the life of the church and/or in the community will be part of ensuring we are truly a welcoming and inclusive community.

Bolstering our practices in terms of **supporting the minister** and raising issues will be important. Better understanding the role of **Committees** (and Council) in mediating conflicts and then individually committing to raising issues through the committee process rather than at coffee time or in the parking lot will assist us in handling conflict in a more positive way. In addition, we need to look at how we communicate personally. Learning and practicing how to be positive in the face of negativity, to seek understanding rather to ignore or shy away from a conversation would be useful. This could also help us with communicating positively about KSM out in the broader community and correcting misinformation.

Exploring new ideas about **Outreach** (i.e. serving in the community and wider world) and finding a common new project was mentioned several times.

### **5) How are you feeling?**

Unsurprisingly, emotions and feelings ranged on a spectrum from positive (hopeful, good, excited, optimistic, committed) to negative (sad, frustrated, angry, worried, confused). Addressing the root causes and making sure "this" doesn't happen was mentioned as well as concern for burnout for lay leaders and the challenges presented spiritually by the situation. Apprehension was reflected in questions about how we will continue without a minister, and even, how we will attract another minister. Emotionally, there is a strong commitment to working through the issues and moving forward.