

Searched by the Psalms

**Psalm 146 & Luke 16:19-31
(Hymns – 443, 240, 689, 732)**

September 26, 2010

A Trustworthy God

I hope that most of you
will be able to attend the congregational consultation
we have scheduled for the early afternoon of Nov 6, 2010.

We will begin with lunch
and then consider and talk about the findings
from Cindy Johal's Master's project.
It has been focused on how trust and collaboration
can build a healthier and more flourishing community
here at Brentwood Presbyterian Church.
This is an opportunity for us to celebrate what is going well here
and figure out how we can improve on it.
God has blessed us with a vibrant and welcoming spirit.
This is another opportunity to nourish that community spirit
and help it flourish even more faithfully.

What struck me most when Cindy was reviewing her data with me
was the consistent acknowledgement that the source of our trust
is found in God in Jesus Christ, working through the Holy Spirit.

That recognition that whatever trust we enjoy with each other
is grounded in the trustworthiness of God
is so important to our strength and future as a congregation.

When we are "God-centred" and "God-focused",
as one person interviewed said,
trust is built on the foundation of his truth.

That truth is found in a trusting relationship with Jesus Christ.

That trust, in turn, is expressed and experienced in
feeling comfortable, feeling welcomed, being friendly,
getting to know people through conversations, and joining in worship.
Wise words from a wise congregation.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the congregation
for their support of Cindy in this project
and for the wisdom that has been generated,
through the work and guidance of the Holy Spirit,
wisdom that will both encourage and enlighten us
as we discern and develop the future God has planned for us.
And, of course, a special thanks to Cindy for working with us on this.

Psalm 146 is focused on the trustworthiness of God.
It is the beginning of the concluding doxology of the Psalms (146-150),
summing up the reasons for praising God as Creator and Redeemer.
Doxology is a fancy word that points to a relationship of praise and honour.

These are hymns of praise to a trustworthy God
who has revealed himself to be the source of all faithful flourishing.
Taken together, these 5 concluding Psalms sum up and reinforce
the most important themes throughout the Psalter.
That summary begins with praising a trustworthy God.

No person, asserts the Psalm, is worthy of this kind of trust.
Only God has the power to help humans in the ways they most need.
And the Psalmist is pretty specific about that power and those needs.

This is the God who
made heaven and earth,
the sea and all that is in it,
keeps faith with his covenant,
works justice for those who are wronged,
gives food to the hungry,
releases the captives,
restores sight to the blind,
restores dignity to those who are broken down,
cares for the stranger, the orphan, and the widow,
and complicates things for the wicked.

If you remember the accounts of the life of Jesus Christ,
these are the kinds of things that Jesus does for his neighbours,
for everyone he encounters.

He praises, he prays, he teaches, he heals, he models
the trustworthiness of God described in this Psalm.

He embodies this truth in everything he does.

And through his death, resurrection, and ascension,
God frees us to do the same.

The ability to trust God in this way has been restored in us.

We simply have to choose to enjoy that freedom.

And when we do make the choices that lead to this kind of freedom,
in response to the loving invitations of God
working within us and among us through the Holy Spirit,
we become agents of God's blessing.

We praise God in Jesus Christ,
we trust God in Jesus Christ,
we learn from God in Jesus Christ,
we serve God in Jesus Christ,
we witness to God in Jesus Christ,

we enjoy God in Jesus Christ,
and we flourish in friendship with God in Jesus Christ forever,
all through the inner work of God's Holy Spirit.

This kind of trust will serve us well
in the months ahead that lie ahead of us here at Brentwood.
As you can see from the report on our Joint Session Meeting last Sunday,
it has become that Burnaby Taiwanese Presbyterian Church
has outgrown this facility and we cannot expand enough on this property
to provide what they need for their growing congregation.

They are looking for more adequate facilities
and we will do everything we can to help them.
At the same time, everything our session has heard from the congregation
Indicates a determination to stay in this location
and rebuild our mission and ministry here in North West Burnaby.
We have the spirit, the vision, the resources, and the determination
to grow into a thriving congregation of 100-150
flourishing friends of Jesus Christ,
worshipping, learning, supporting each other, and serving
here in this rapidly-growing neighbourhood.

[review the details in the appended report to the congregation]

Jesus Christ has called us to this task in this moment.
Our energies now shift from building the partnership with the Taiwanese
to building a new future for Brentwood
as a multi-ethnic, inter-cultural congregation of Christ's people,
nourishing souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ.
We will continue to explore in earnest these possibilities
at our congregational consultation in early November.
There may be (probably will be)
some short term costs because of the loss of revenue
from the Taiwanese monthly contribution when they move,
but we have the resources to see us through that time
and we have the creativity to replace those revenues from elsewhere.

Throughout this journey over the next few months,
we will trust in Jesus Christ, God with us and God for us.
We will praise, pray, sing, learn, come together in mutual support, and serve
with even greater fervour,
inspired and encouraged by God's continuous presence
in the trustworthy power of the Holy Spirit.

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A Report from the Joint Sessions Meeting on Sept 19, 2010

What Seems Possible at 1600 Delta?

In company with Harry Christie, an elder at First Presbyterian Church, New Westminster, and an employee of the City of Burnaby Engineering Department for over 35 years, I had a meeting with Zeralynne Modequillo and Margaret Manifold of the Planning and Building Department at the city on August 31, 2010. We reviewed what might be possible by way of expansion on the Brentwood Presbyterian site and explored other possibilities within the City of Burnaby for church development.

The following are the key points in our conversation:

- Our current property, if subdivided and sold, would probably yield 3 city building lots, worth between \$600 - \$800,000 each (16.46 frontage each) – estimated value of the property alone, then, is \$2 million.
- The current zoning is P1 – Neighbourhood Institution District (conditions attached) – uses permitted are places of public worship, child care facilities, a dwelling for the minister or caretaker (provided the dwelling is on the same lot as the institution), and accessory buildings and uses – this zoning is designed for institutions that serve a residential neighbourhood, so buildings and parking suitable for a regional church are not envisioned
- The height of the building cannot exceed 2 storeys (which we are at already)
- The front yard must be 24.61ft from the lot line, the side yard must be 14.76ft from the lot line, and the back yard must be 29.53ft from the lot line (we are nonconforming here) – we could expand the current building 14' towards the west and 11' towards the south – expansion towards the north would likely reduce available parking – any parking we might realize by buying back the manse (even if that is possible) would be restricted by the 24.61ft. set back
- Maximum coverage is 40% of the lot area – we do have space to expand – but whether that expansion can meet the growing needs of BTPC for both space and parking is a serious question
- We need one parking spot for every 9 sq metres in the main assembly area and one parking spot for every 19 sq metres in other areas (halls, meeting rooms, class rooms, and gyms) – that adds up to 31 parking spaces - we have plenty of parking for current space and use – but new builds would bring the new parking regulations into play – the only way would be underground parking at \$40,000 a space
- There is no more P1 space in the Official Community Plan set aside for church use in Burnaby – very unlikely that a request for a variance to allow for a church would be approved, since neighbourhood use also includes community centres, schools, etc. – no new church use has been approved in the last 10 years

The Nature of the Neighbourhoods of North West Burnaby

If we consider the Brentwood congregation as the Presbyterian presence in North West Burnaby – Brentwood (7,565), Willingdon Heights (10,035), Burnaby Heights (7,210), Capital Hill (5,655), and Parkcrest-Aubrey (6,825) (from the Burrard Inlet to Lougheed and from Boundary to Springer) - then we are serving a population of 37,290 according to the city documents based on the 2006 census data. The ethnic origins of the population are very mixed, something that is true of the membership of the Brentwood congregation as well. Significant population growth is taking place in the immediate vicinity of the church as a large concentration of high-rise apartments and townhouses is being built around Brentwood Town Centre.

The Character of Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Brentwood Presbyterian Church is a multi-ethnic, inter-cultural congregation that has served the neighbourhoods of North West Burnaby described briefly above for the past 48 years. We own our land and have over \$225,000 that we are willing to invest in renewing our future as a vibrant and vital centre for mission and ministry. We see ourselves as a neighbourhood church growing to 100-150 members over the next decade. We invite people to get centred in Jesus Christ in worship and learning, to enjoy community with Jesus Christ in fellowship, and to experience the compassion of Jesus Christ in service. Taken together, these activities nourish people to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ.

What is Not Negotiable (at this point)

From all our conversations as a congregation to date, what is not negotiable is the continuing existence of Brentwood Presbyterian Church as a multi-ethnic and inter-cultural community through which souls are nourished to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ in North West Burnaby. We are confident, God being our helper, that we can grow this congregation into a viable and vibrant centre for Presbyterian mission and ministry in this rapidly growing neighbourhood. Achieving that result will take time – probably 5-10 years – but we have the physical, human, and spiritual resources to make the effort.

The Conclusion Reached by the Joint Session (to be tested with our congregations and the Presbytery)

The future flourishing of Burnaby Taiwanese Presbyterian Church will be best served by moving to a location better suited to its needs as a rapidly-growing ethnic regional church. Brentwood Presbyterian Church will ask Presbytery to release BTPC from the covenant as soon as they find an alternative place. BPC will offer its full support in helping BTPC find such a place and encourage the Presbytery of Westminster and Canada Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada to do the same. The focus of the energies and talents of Brentwood Presbyterian, then, will be on growing into a flourishing congregation in North West Burnaby.

The Rev. Dr. Brian Fraser, Minister
Pam Wong, Clerk of Session