

Feedback mainly positive

The pages following this synopsis list the 159 comments recorded at the four town hall meeting on the Peterborough Covenant. And the feedback is mainly positive.

While many people were critical of the churches' record on dealing with young people and families, the discussions focused on opportunities for improved communication and co-operation instead of expressing concerns about these issues.

Even those town hall groups that disapproved of the churches' handling of issues such as Sunday school, Baptism and service times that respect the time constraints of modern families, had suggestions for fixing the problem.

In fact, communication, co-operation among the four parishes and issues involving families and young people topped the collective agenda. The biggest negative was suspicion that the Covenant and discussions around it might be a way to distract people from the possibility that churches could still be closed.

A handful of people suggested asking what God wants the four parishes to be doing. And three parties took the time to write down their comments and send them on to those involved in preparing the Covenant.

Critics included people concerned that the Covenant doesn't say much about evangelism. They also wanted assurance that their dissent would be taken seriously.

Some 142 Peterborough Anglicans attended the four town hall meetings at All Saints, St. Barnabas, St. John's and St. Luke's churches, including the 20 who braved an evening snowstorm. Several mentioned that the many Covenant meetings had helped Peterborough Anglicans to get to know one another. It is now up to the Group Council to meet, review the comments and decide what happens now.

FOUR TOWN HALL MEETINGS:

There were approximately 124 people at the four Town Hall Meetings of St. Luke's, St. John's, All Saints and St. Barnabas in March, 2014. The following are the Concerns and Opportunities covered at these meetings.

CONCERNS:

1. Group Council – wardens are already too busy – it will stretch them too thin
2. Retiree's Agenda – this runs the church
3. A fear of 'giving up their turf'
4. What do we have to give up to make it work
5. There is a lack of follow up with young families
6. It was felt that when the church has a meeting that the Agenda has already been decided thereby making you feel disempowered
7. Concern that dissenting comments re: the Covenant may not be heard

8. What does sharing gifts between clergy mean?
9. Fear that one or more churches will close regardless of Covenant(2)
10. Distrust of system to mean that churches will be closing anyway – emotion/frustration evident
11. Frustration, even anger, shown that this Covenant will not be effective in dealing with continuing and accelerating decline – feeling that a much more radical approach is needed
12. Need inventories re: use of space – example for group rehearsals (could get younger people)
13. Need to share more info
14. One website could link the four churches
15. Common telephone number
16. Find a way to interest non-church goers
17. A sharing of secretarial resources
18. Need more communications face to face
19. Need to be open to change
20. Change is necessary
21. Is Group Council closed to non-elected members?
22. Lack of communication re: whole process
23. Need better demographic info
24. Conflict dominates covenant
25. Conflict resolution should be part of conflict
26. The sharing of resources could be classed as a positive
27. 40% decline in attendance and decline in cash
28. Historical buildings difficult to maintain. When do we say spend no more money
29. Concern re: not mention of reaching out in Covenant
30. Need young people to grow for the church to grow
31. What is 'The Parish'(congregation meeting at St. Alban's) doing right?
32. Covenant does not go far enough or fast enough – let's get on with it!
33. Transportation – way to ensure older members can participate
34. Adequate and effective communication system – many don't have computers
35. Need catchy brochure
36. Item 8 of the Covenant – The Grove, Lakefield College – confusing! (Addressed.)
37. Ongoing fear or suspicion that this is a way to close a church.
38. Is Covenant a front for something else i.e. closing churches OR is it an opportunity?
39. Bitterness re: closing churches.
40. Fear of change, which has to happen?
41. Communication from key influencers meetings was vague.
42. Need information from upcoming meetings
43. Need to get people back at church
44. Is there a youth group in Peterborough?
45. Finances: what happens with offering from communal services? Go to Outreach/Go to Services? Should it go to Outreach or go to a specific fund i.e. Not go to host church. Don't do collection at shared services.
46. What happens if only three of four churches agree to Covenant?
47. How will we address declining enrolment?

48. Are we getting young people into church. Is this addressed in the Covenant?
49. Shared Sunday School
50. Shared Youth Leadership
51. How do we encourage mums and dads to come?
52. Look at alternate time – perhaps Saturday for church and Sunday School
53. Express Service – half an hour like R.C.'s
54. Thursday afternoon 5.30 – 6.00 express service
55. Guilt factor has worked well for R.C.s
56. Baptism easy – no commitment afterwards
57. Everyone invited to communion rail – like going to McDonald's
58. Pre-communion classes shared by churches
59. Removal of the Lord's Prayer in schools – only contact to church
60. Rev. Glenn Empey may be a good contact (Chaplain at Trent) re: youth
61. How far are we willing to reach out to children after Baptism? Great opportunity for church to intervene i.e. nursery age
62. Important that feed-back from Town Hall meetings be available for March 30th, Vestry
63. #4 clause – concern re: “appropriate forum”
64. #5 clause – concern re: “what does 'both' mean?”
65. Concern that we are word-smithing
66. P.A. Day programming
67. Won't get young people back to church if we don't accommodate their schedule/type of service/music.
68. Would like to go back to Communion only after Confirmation – would like open Communion Rail
69. Communication – lots of people without access to computers
70. Need for larger print
71. Are we overstaffed in administration?
72. Buildings may not match what we want to do
73. Where do envelopes go when you visit another church? Many people use P.A.R
74. People should be allowed to attend group council meetings but they would not have a vote.

OPPORTUNITIES:

1. Observation was made that God does not appear in the wording until the second page of this section. It was felt that the points should be re-arranged so that spiritual should be in the forefront and efficiencies second. This was addressed.
2. It was felt that the priority of the Covenant is not seen on the slides. This was addressed.
3. It was also felt by another member that the Covenant encompassed the reality of why everyone is gathered to discuss it.
4. It was generally acknowledged that there is a great deal of passionate spirituality in our congregations – how do we harness that to reach out to the seekers who are out there and evident by the number of different church structures that are springing up i.e. Messy Church and Mixed Economy Church
5. What are the solutions needed?
6. What different structures are needed other than traditional church as we know it?
7. The opportunity to reach out to the student population

8. Competition between clergy has turned into collaboration – sharing information, shared learning, shared costs, shared communications between parishes – all of this is unique but will also bring challenges to congregations re: compromising, growth, etc.
9. Needed this process
10. Should include Lutheran
11. Warming Room and Lighthouse challenge, but turned out positive
12. Better ways using property for outside functions – example – Glebe Land at St. John's
 - Good stewardship – how is it best used?
13. Hoops – dealing with property, groups
14. Streamlining visitors process
15. Know who the other ministers are
16. Empowering lay people for visiting etc.
17. We are incredibly loyal to what we value in our churches
18. No more lone-rangers
19. Opportunity for communication
20. Pentecostal – 70% change in 5 yrs. Anglicans are loyal
21. Sharing talents i.e. doing income tax for low-income people
22. Seek out professed Anglicans who don't come to church
23. Public presentation re: what we are doing
24. Info @Tourist Board and Chamber of Commerce re: Anglican Worship Services and activities
25. Doing things jointly shows folks we're working together
26. Joint ads, posters, etc.
27. Sharing all our talents
28. More concentration on opening up to youth – more arts, music, drama
29. St.Luke's service broadcast - pending
30. List re: what everyone is doing – message of church to retirement homes
31. Alternate times for church services for families who can't make Sunday a.m.
32. Insert in everyone's bulletin re: what is happening each week
33. Richer experiences
34. Share events – example Spaghetti dinner, golf, etc.
35. Opportunities to welcome
36. Hospital visiting- make sure you identify as Anglican
37. We need not just to share but co-ordinate resources.
38. St. John's – the way current buildings are being used.
39. Goal is to be a welcoming community.
40. All Saints – Community Care, Dance Groups.
41. St. Barnabas – Nursery School, 3 Deacons in different ministries
42. Why couldn't St. Barnabas do something using other church building.
43. Christmas Tea, Musical, services for all 4 churches.
44. Are individual and corporate strengths the same?
45. Formalize what is already going on.
46. Strength in numbers.
47. Is the church in business?
48. We could begin asking – what is Jesus calling us to do?

49. Opportunity to hear from other people for more sharing i.e. checking on people after ice storm.
50. What is God doing in community – i.e. All Saints
51. Co-operation and co-ordination
52. Feel like belonging together – able to talk
53. Communication - co-ordinated and efficient
54. We want to move forward
55. Is a business sense needed for building administration?
56. Centralize information
57. How can we better utilize our physical resources – may have to make tough decisions
58. Broadening our feeling of being part of Anglican Communion
59. Come up with solutions together
60. Helping us to take competition out of churches
61. Opportunities to plan communal social and liturgical events – opportunities to share
62. Framework to move forward
63. Improve commitment of laity
64. Allays fears of closing churches – not the reason for this Covenant
65. Wonderful that the four clergy are meeting together
66. Heartening that the Lutheran church is being drawn in
67. Good business sense – sharing of administration – maybe one single person
68. Sharing contracts for grass, cleaning, snow – easier to get someone for more hours work
69. Bulletin board in each church – re: driver's available (or drives)
70. Lessening of competition among churches
71. Call for action – doing things together, barbecue – July/August
72. Getting to know one another
73. Feeling better as Christians
74. Where would you go if your church closed? Another Anglican church or other denomination?
75. Strength in numbers
76. Sharing resources
77. Better use of time
78. Enjoyable experience
79. Shared Sunday School – could split families but would work at another time during week
80. Need younger wardens. Maybe limiting tenure might encourage more to become involved
81. Nursery School at St. Barnabas – opportunity
82. All ages welcome at Communion Rail
83. Pre-communion classes
84. Patience – this will take some time

GENERAL COMMENTS:

1. God and Money – in answer to a comment that we need to get back to the emphasis on God and not finance – this is the reason that we are in the present discussions
2. We have not mentioned joy anywhere at all in these discussions and this is something which draws people together
3. Are there other opportunities re: other ecumenical groups

4. We need to find some way to communicate with those of the congregation who are not able to attend Town Hall meetings. This has been addressed.
5. The concerns mentioned needed to be in the Covenant for some to be able to vote on it.
6. The observation that God does not appear in the wording in the Opportunities section has been addressed
7. Priority of the Covenant is not seen on the slides – this has also been addressed
8. Have discussion group to deal with challenges and strengths
9. Other denominations facing same challenges

Note: All of the above will be discussed at the Group Council meetings.