



Building with Living Stones

St. John The Evangelist Anglican Church

October 22, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am writing to thank you for your prayers and contribution to the discernment process regarding the Stone Church. On October the 3rd we held a parish meeting to conclude this process which began back in 2019. In April 2019, under the direction of Dr. Nancy Matthis, we started to explore any feasible use for the Stone Church building. This was done largely by the Stone Church Action team, which submitted a report in June 2019. The action team was very helpful in clarifying the current state of the building and in discovering that it was not a heritage site and therefore not entitled to any heritage funding. However, the team was not able to identify any feasible use for the Stone Church building itself. Another parish meeting was held in October 2019 to further discuss the future of the Stone Church. The end result of this discernment process is that vestry made the difficult decision to request that the Bishop deconsecrate the building and to seek his permission to see it demolished. I want to stress that this was a very difficult decision, since there is not a single person in our parish who wants to deconsecrate and demolish the stone church.

Indeed, there was a call for a private vote from the congregation. This did not seem necessary as, in accordance with Canon 6, it is the Parish Corporation that is given the mandate to make decisions regarding the management of the parish property. This request also seemed out of place following the process of discernment that we as a parish undertook. That is why the survey distributed to the parish on October 3rd did not ask for a vote. It asked for expressions of support or not for the decision made by vestry. The intent behind this was to invite feedback so that we might continue this difficult journey together in a spirit of love and unity.

We were pleased with the number of parish surveys that were completed and given back to vestry. We received a total of 36 surveys. Of those 36 surveyed 31 parishioners expressed their support of vestry's decision. One person expressed their probable support - providing that a suitable project plan be established. And four individuals expressed that they could not support the decision to deconsecrate and demolish the building. Vestry would like to express their sincere thanks for those who took the time to let us know their thoughts and feelings regarding this issue.

Now that vestry has formalized the decision to approach the bishop to deconsecrate and demolish the Stone Church building, attention must be given to doing this well, with great sensitivity for all who are grieving at this time. Vestry will form a Committee that will draw up a plan to demolish the building while working in conjunction with Archives NB to document all things well. This same committee will work to draw up plans for a suitable

"Not Equal Giving, but Equal Sacrifice"

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memorial on site, as well as explore ways to incorporate certain items within the new building. If you would like to offer your name for consideration to be on this committee, please connect with the Wardens or the Rector.

I would like to take time to address some of the concerns raised by the surveys. One concern raised was the apparent haste at which we came to this decision. This process has been going on for four years now. We have looked into the cost to restore the building. And we simply do not have money available in our operations budget. Back in 2018 we made a special appeal to raise money to restore the back half of the roof and less than half of the amount requested came in. It seems we do not have the will or the means within our church to save the building. Sadly, it is now time to act. It would be heartbreaking to see the stone building degrade to the point that it becomes dangerous and an eyesore as has been the case in other areas.

Some have asked why we have not made an appeal to the wider community. There are a couple of reasons for this. The Stone Church building is our responsibility. If we cannot afford its upkeep - it should not become the burden of the wider community. We are here to be a blessing to those living and working in Douglas & Nashwaaksis. If we were to approach the wider community for funds - I would hope it would be in support of our mission to bless those less fortunate, rather than for saving a building that we love but do not need.

In connection to this concern, another was raised: How and when should the wider community be notified? I would suggest that this is an issue that should be discussed carefully by the committee.

One person expressed concern about the use of the Stone Church Trust fund. I want to assure you that the Stone Church Trust will not be used to pay for the demolition of the building. As was expressed in the motion passed by vestry: The Stone Church Trust Fund would not be used to pay for demolition costs nor to cover costs of erecting a memorial. We intend to honour the trust which states: "In the event that the St. John the Evangelist Stone Church no longer physically exists, the funds in the St. John the Evangelist Stone Church Trust Fund shall be used for the maintenance and operation of other buildings in the care of the Corporation of Douglas and Nashwaaksis or its successors."

It is our hope and prayer that moving forward we would continue to seek unity in Christ. If you have any concerns or questions or simply need to talk please reach out. May God bless you all.

The Rev'd Paul Ranson
Rector of St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church

The following motion was unanimously passed by the Vestry of The Corporation of the Anglican Parish of Douglas and Nashwaaksis on October 21, 2021.

Whereas unsafe air quality test results in 2018 prompted Vestry to vote to stop having worship services at the Stone Church;

Whereas a discernment process for the future of the Stone Church has been ongoing since the 2018 closure, and has included the following:

- Parish meeting / information session in February 2019
- Parish survey on the Stone Church in April 2019
- Parish meeting and facilitated workshop by Nancy Mathis in April 2019
- Creation of a Stone Church Working Group to examine the repair costs and possible funding sources and alternate uses of the Stone Church in May – June 2019
- Pastoral letter from Rev. Paul Ranson in the 2019 Annual Report
- Parish meeting and survey in October 2021 (originally scheduled for March 2020)

Whereas St. John's Anglican Church is experiencing significant financial challenges, with offerings down in each of the last three years and accumulated deficits of over \$35,000 from 2017 to 2019;

Whereas the annual operating costs of the Stone Church are approximately \$5,000 per year and there is an immediate need for \$30,000 to \$40,000 in immediate repairs (2019 quote);

Whereas the issues of accessibility, parking, and safe access across Main Street remain as significant concerns;

Whereas the Stone Church Working Group determined that while the Stone Church is listed as a provincial and federal "Historic Place", it does not qualify for a heritage designation and no sources of heritage funding were identified;

Whereas there is consensus with Rev. Paul Ranson's vision that our time, money, and efforts should be focused on helping those in need in our immediate community;

Whereas the vast majority of written responses (31 of 36) following an October 3, 2021 parish meeting voted "Yes" to the following question: "Do you support Vestry's unanimous position that it is not feasible to maintain and repair the Stone Church, and that steps should be taken to deconsecrate and demolish the building"; and

Whereas Cannon 6, section 4(1)(c) authorizes the Parish Corporation (Rector, Parish Wardens, and Vestry) to "dispose of real property only with the approval of the Bishop and the Finance Committee of the Diocesan Council",

We hereby approve of the following with respect to the Stone Church:

1. That a Stone Church Artifact Preservation and Memorial Committee be established to make recommendations to Vestry with respect to the usage of artifacts and other significant physical elements of the Stone Church prior to its deconsecration by the Bishop, as well as a recommendation with respect to any physical structure or memorial to be built on the site of the Stone Church;
2. That a recommendation be made to the Bishop to deconsecrate and dispose of the Stone Church, following the receipt of recommendations from the Stone Church Artifact Preservation and Memorial Committee referenced in item (1) above;
3. That the Stone Church Trust Fund not be used for either the demolition costs or any costs associated with a physical structure or memorial to commemorate the Stone Church, as the parameters of the Stone Church Trust Fund specify that "In the event that the St. John the Evangelist Stone Church no longer physically exists, the funds in the St. John the Evangelist Stone Church Trust Fund shall be used for the maintenance and operation of other buildings in the care of the Corporation of Douglas and Nashwaaksis or its successors";
4. That the Stone Church Projects funds, which consisted of various designated offerings for the Stone Church but which are not subject to the parameters of the Stone Church Trust Fund, be used to cover any costs of artifact preservation and the construction of any memorial to commemorate the Stone Church; and
5. That the actual demolition costs for the Stone Church be paid through regular operational funding or through other funds that are not restricted in their use.

*God of our lives,
by the power of your Holy Spirit
we have been drawn together by one baptism into one faith,
serving one Lord and Savior.
We thank you for guiding us
through this process of discernment.
We now ask for grace to move forward in your will,
preserving us in unity,
as one body of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*