

Memorandum of Understanding
Between Meewasin Valley United (MVU) and Southminster-Steinhauer United Church (SSUC)

For the period September 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

Background and Summary:

MVU:

- started to move in the “expansive” or “progressive” faith direction many years ago by creating a vision and developing a community that is determined to continue down this path.
- has done some significant work in the areas of community outreach and social justice, education, music, drama, and exploring spiritual practices.
- has attempted to market itself to “like-minded” individuals that wanted to commit to this direction. MVU has not been able to find significant numbers of individuals in Saskatchewan to remain committed to the journey and sustain our operation.
- subsequent to the recent JNAC process, has approved and initiated a closure process to be completed by June, 2018; and with the reality of the current level of energy within the small group of MVU members, can no longer support ourselves in the areas of spiritual or administrative leadership.
- has no interest or willingness to be dissuaded from the “expansive faith” path.
- From February to April of 2018, MVU and SSUC have held several discussions regarding the draft Memorandum of Understanding

SSUC:

- has been exploring an expansive and non-theistic spirituality in Edmonton for many years, developing resources and attempting to provide those resources through online formats and conference hosting to those in progressive/expansive communities that need these resources and support.
- has expanded its video resources for communities that wish to gather in areas of the country with no such expansive communities.
- has attempted to live as one of its commitments an openness to inclusion that reaches beyond physical/geographic limitations.
- has participated in online and in-person conversations with the committed members of MVU to initiate a process for understanding needs and possibilities between the two communities.
- has given Board approval for continued conversations and negotiations between the two communities.

And therefore:

- Both communities have committed to moving towards a partnership.
- Together, we will journey towards a mutual agreement of identity and by what name the MVU community shall be known.
- As communities that have explored and moved forward on an expansive and non-theistic path, we commit to pursuing this relationship and learning what we can, so as to nurture each other and to provide a model for other communities wishing to enter similar relationships.

Detailed considerations:

1. Gatherings and Gathering Space

- MVU has secured an arrangement with St. Andrew's College to continue to hold gatherings at St. Andrew's for September 2018 through June 2019.
- As of May 8, 2018, it is proposed that these St. Andrew's gatherings will include the following dates:
 - September 16, October 21, November 18, December 16, December 24, January 20, February 17, March 17, April 19 (Good Friday - evening), April 21 (Easter), May 12.
- MVU will continue to gather as a group in house settings between the joint gatherings with SSUC.
- MVU will work with SSUC to develop suitable technology options for the various gatherings
 - SSUC plans to start regular live streaming in June, 2018; with the goal of two-way conferencing/streaming by October 2018.
- MVU individuals and/ or groups are willing to travel to Edmonton twice a year for face-to-face gatherings and/or meetings.
- SSUC individuals are willing to travel to Saskatoon whenever possible to join MVU in monthly gatherings, and/or other special occasions.

2. Events

- Initially, MVU is proposing that special events in Saskatoon (such as Celebrating Spirit) be put on hold for the first year of transition.
- MVU may be willing to consider special events (including joint events) in the second year and beyond.
- SSUC will invite MVU participation in as many mid-week program opportunities as possible and as technology allows (e.g. Book studies, lecture series, etc.)

3. Music

- The Nephesh Spirit vocal group will consider travelling to Edmonton to present music and/or drama presentations, or alternatively, could send videos.
- SSUC is welcome to any existing MVU music resources and music anthology, as will MVU be welcome to any musical resources of SSUC.

4. Community

- Building Community
 - MVU and SSUC would welcome face-to-face opportunities with each other.
 - MVU would welcome opportunities for conversation after joint gatherings.
 - There may be opportunities to share special speaker engagements, book studies, small group opportunities, etc. with each other.
- Partnerships/ Outreach
 - MVU wishes to maintain local partnerships related to outreach initiatives.
 - MVU is willing to discuss joint opportunities in this area with SSUC and for special appeals.

5. Financial and Donations

- The disbursement process of MVU invested funds will be determined together with River Bend Presbytery and dispersed as soon as possible:

- It is intended that the financial gift to be held in trust for the River Bend Integrated Community Ministries (ICM) will remain in trust until it is transferred to ICM in whole or in part, at ICM's request, and in the amount(s) requested by ICM.
- It is intended that the MVU legacy gift to SSUC be utilized in the areas of:
 - Further advancements in Progressive/Expansive Christianity;
 - Educational, workshop, or retreat events undertaken by either Edmonton or Saskatoon folks connected to SSUC;
 - Technology improvements;
 - Outreach initiatives.
- SSUC is willing (in conjunction and agreement with MVU) to administer finance and budget requirements as requested by MVU. (funding requests, money transfers, bookkeeping, etc.)
- It is anticipated that donations by former MVU members that transfer their membership to SSUC will be near to or at previous commitment levels
 - As needs are identified, and subject to further discussions, the financial offerings from Saskatoon and area can be available to Saskatoon and area.
- MVU will work with SSUC as required to determine if EDGE funding may be available for the transition and beyond.

6. Governance

- MVU persons are welcome to participate in any meetings of the SSUC Board and committees (in person or by distance technology)
- In the future, discussion will occur regarding the possibility of particular MVU representation within the SSUC board and committee structure.

7. Administration and Communications

- MVU believes there would be a requirement for local (Saskatoon) paid administration, communications, and technical support, for a few hours per month.
- We will strive towards shared communications between MVU and SSUC and within each local community. (email newsletter subscriptions, etc.)

8. Significant Life Celebrations

- MVU proposes that SSUC has the first right of refusal for leadership of such events, though local Saskatoon volunteers would be very capable of many of these tasks.
- SSUC will provide resources, staff, support, as necessary.

9. United Church considerations

- As part of the closure of MVU, members have the option to transfer their membership to SSUC.
- SSUC welcomes any and all MVU members, adherents, and friends. There is a possibility of publicly welcoming all involved at a gathering in October, 2018.

10. Timelines

- MVU and SSUC representatives met on Monday, April 16th in Lloydminster for further partnership discussions.
- SSUC Board/Executive meets May 23rd for approval of completed MOU.
- Target MOU completion including signatures by May 31, 2018 at the MVU closure service.

- First review by both parties by mid December 2018. This will include any required revisions for the remainder of the year up to June 30, 2019
 - Second review by both parties by mid May 2019. This will include any required revisions for the following year.
 - **Note** – Revisions of this MOU can be by mutual agreement of the parties representing MVU and SSUC.
 - **Approved by consensus by COG, May 15, 2018**
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Signed by:

SSUC

MVU

SSUC

MVU

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MVU

Date completed: _____