

Journey of Aurora United and Trinity leads hundreds to Town Park to say thanks



By Brock Weir

Lapel buttons were the only things distinguishing congregations as members of Aurora United Church and Trinity Anglican Church turned out in the hundreds on Sunday morning to collectively give thanks to the community.

Sunday's outdoor service, gathered around the band shell, was a way not just for the two congregations to give thanks to the community as they embarked on their unlikely journey together after fire ripped through Aurora United, but also to celebrate their newfound friendship and relationships with the Town at large.

Lead by Reverends Dawn Davis and Ian Martin of Trinity, along with Andy Comar and Lorraine Newton- Comar of Aurora United, the two churches unveiled their vision of [?#Room4U2.?](#)

[?This is the new banner that will be in front of 79 Victoria Street, so that everyone who goes by can know that on this step in our journey we are cohabitating,?](#) said Davis, noting she hoped the hashtag would start a conversation on their new joint mission. [?When you look at it, we are really so blessed and we have so much. Just moving over and making room for each other, there is still, amazingly, room for all.?](#)

Sunday's service drove home that message, first to kids, likening the new relationship to making the first tentative new steps towards a prospective new friend at summer camp. You might not know each other right away, they said, but given time you can become fast friends.

To the adults as well, this journey was traumatised by two congregants from each community finding themselves converging from opposite sides of a collective path. For them, their message was they were stronger moving forward together.

Delivering the homily for the day was Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, who was praised by the two churches for his response to the fire in its immediate aftermath, continuing through today. When asked to deliver the homily, Mayor Dawe said he initially wondered what he had gotten himself into, but soon found inspiration in the words of people reflecting on how faith helped them through their struggle. Among these works was [?Thou Shalt Not Hate?](#), written by a man living in the Gaza Conflict whose three daughters were killed by an artillery shell, while a fourth made an arduous recovery.

[?I don't know how an incident like that could not turn you into a fanatical hater, ready, willing and able to do harm to anyone at any time in any place,?](#) said Mayor Dawe. [?Yet, he rose above that. It was his response to the tragedy that made new and won him humanitarian awards. Instead of seeking revenge, or sinking into hatred, he called on the people in the Region to start talking to each other. His deepest hope is that his daughters will be the ?last sacrifice on the road to peace.?'?](#)

The man's faith, he said was a 'staff' to help them on their journey, and parallels could be found with Aurora United Church. As a 'revered piece' of Aurora's history, 'and a critical thread in the fabric of our Town', a number of people in the community, regardless of religion, were touched by its loss, he said.

'A building steeped in tradition that was violently removed from our landscape and now the conversation centres on how to move forward,' said Mayor Dawe. 'I have been quite heartened by those conversations. Conversations very much show how the residents of Aurora of all faiths, all walks of life, wanted to help their neighbours. They were conversations that lead to Trinity Anglican and AUC coming together to share the worship space and, today, share worship. They were conversations which showed Aurora is a community of faith.

'In preparing this, I reflected a lot on those conversations, the demonstration of character, courage and conviction, and a testament to the true meaning of our community and our faith. In the midst of an unfolding tragedy, these conversations provided hope, inspiration and optimism. You set a brilliant example of what it means to be a good neighbour and for your giving our community is a much better place.'

The theme of the 'journey' was one which resonated throughout the service. Near the end, Newton-Comar told those in attendance that although there are many ways in which their two denominations will remain separate, there are bigger things at play.

'From the time we have been called to travel on this path together, we will share strengths and vulnerabilities,' she said. 'We will offer support and care. We will be challenged to share, grow and love.'

Following her words, those wearing the lapel buttons of their respective congregations traded them with others as a symbol of unity.