

Report to Classis Huron: Church Visit to 1st CRC of Owen Sound, Apr. 28, 2021

Introduction: First Christian Reformed Church of Owen Sound ministers to a city of 21,000 people and the surrounding area. The congregation has 95 families, 295 adult professing members, and 200 baptized members. Half live in the city and half within a half our drive. We met, by Zoom, with Church council and Rev Sid Couperus, who has been the minister in Owen Sound since 2019. Church visitor Rev. Martin Dam led the conversation by focusing on the 4 directions of ministry. No communication was received from church members.

Ministry of the Word and Congregational Life: This is central to church life. Elders report that members are spiritually nourished by preaching of the Word. During Covid-19 lockdowns, worship services have been streamed with about 200 tuning in. In July last year, when reduced in person worship was allowed, young families were given priority. Uptake was small so the invitation for in person worship was extended to all. Rev. Couperus was praised for his boundless energy, the fact that he has kept a positive attitude during a difficult time and his encouragement of the elders and deacons, especially during the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Church Leadership: Council consists of the minister, 12 elders and 6 deacons. Each elder has a district including a youth elder. Substantive decisions are made by Council. Members work well together. The membership respects and supports the leadership of church council.

What does Owen Sound do well? Members love and care for each. One elder, who had suffered a personal loss, was told by a community person, "You will be alright, your church cares for its people". It has programs for all age ranges but particularly children's and youth programs. Last year the church hired Youth Program Coordinator Carrie Van Dorp. It has ensured that its facilities are sufficient for ministry by having 3 building projects since the church was constructed in 1964. In 2006 the church acquired an adjacent building for office space and community use. It meets ministry shares 100%.

Challenges: Recruiting younger members for leadership. Recapturing the momentum achieved during a Visioning weekend one week before the pandemic shut down. Reaching out to people who say they don't need a church to be spiritual. Geographic isolation from other CRC congregations. Will we recover once the pandemic is over?

Summary: Owen Sound CRC is a strong church that ministers well to its members and community: Church Visitors: Martin Dam and Henry de Young