

Northern Cluster Meeting Report to Northern Spirit Regional Council

On Saturday, November 2nd, 2019, 38 representatives from 14 congregations of the Northern area of the Northern Spirit Regional Council met to consult with one another and to discern the needs of our communities for support going forward. (Fort Nelson and Yellowknife were not included this time).

The consultation was facilitated by Shelley Sabo, A Circle Way facilitator from Grace United Church in Edmonton. The Communities of Faith Support Committee sent their representative, Wendy Galloway, and approved support for this gathering by covering the honorarium and travel for the facilitator and food for participants. Also in attendance was Earl Reaburn, Pastoral Relations Minister.

We had a full day from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with a circle time prior to lunch and then, constantly changing table groups for the afternoon. There was much energy in the room and many new faces from boards, etc.: not just former Presbytery representatives. Discussion focused on how we were feeling since the change, and what we saw as important going forward to meet the needs of all our various congregations to feel connected and supported despite our distances. It was a wonderful day, and we are thankful to the Communities of Faith Support Committee for their leadership and the financial support that made it possible.

The overall consensus was that this kind of thing should happen about twice a year, and be open to participants from all congregations, generally from Hwy 16 west and up Highway 2 north of Edmonton, and/or anyone who felt connected to such a cluster. The spirit of caring and concern and shared support that emanates from regular gathering is important to bridge the isolation that geography in the north engenders.

After the meeting, a request for continued support for cluster meetings was sent to the Regional Council Executive. We learned in December that the NSRC Executive approved up to \$2,000.00 to be made available for the 2020 “spring” northern cluster gathering. Emails were circulated to keep prayer requests and news items shared among the cluster contacts. A few of us had started discussions on possible spring gathering dates. Possible speakers were contacted and then, the shut-down hit, and it just got tabled as we all tried to deal with the changes locally first.

Fairly regular ZOOM meetings for large groups of NSRC people on various topics started. Individual congregations figured out their plans for keeping community members safe, and connected to one another. ZOOM burnout seemed a thing, and in the shuffle, the cluster plans dissipated. But now conversations are starting as to what we can do to once again connect one with another as a “Northern Cluster”. We’ll keep you all posted as we start to make plans once again.

Respectfully submitted by
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Communications Liaison for the Northern Cluster