



Northern Spirit Regional Council
2nd Annual Meeting
Listening, Discerning
October 14, 2020

The evening was opened at 7:30 pm by Britt Aerhart, Convenor of the Regional Council Meeting, who welcomed the 151 participants. Britt explained that tonight's meeting would be a learning opportunity and that next week would be the more formal business meeting. She introduced Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister; Gord Waldie, Chairperson of the Regional Council Executive; Deborah Hoekstra, Planning Team Chairperson; and Kathy Jackson, Registrar. Others providing leadership were introduced as they became involved. Britt then gave a verbal summary of the agenda.

Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister, thanked everyone for joining tonight's meeting. She explained that, just like in our face to face meetings, the decision-making process has been divided into "Listen, Discern, and Decide", and that tonight's meeting was for "Listen and Discern/Discuss". She explained that the next week's meeting would be formally constituted and would focus on "Deciding".

Britt Aerhart then introduced resources for the opening Worship that she had been given by former Moderator, the Very Rev. Stan McKay. The Worship began with a moment of silence, and then Shannon McCarthy, Gord Waldie and Deborah Hoekstra led the Land Acknowledgment. Council members were asked to acknowledge their treaty number. Britt then read a Four Directions Prayer to accompany the lighting of candles. Together, those gathered quietly recited the Lord's Prayer. The scripture for the evening worship was Exodus 3:1-3. It was read by three people in three languages: Lloyd Nyarota in Shona, Jun-Hyok Chon in Korean, and Cathy Kinsman in English.

Britt then offered a pondering on the passage. The theme for this year was to be "Called to Be" and there was no idea of what was to come when it was chosen. She compared our COVID time and Moses' time in the desert; how the burning of the bush made him take notice of something that was usual, and how COVID has made us notice things that we have maybe looked past or not paid attention to before. We are seeing creation in a new way, appreciating diversity of the world and that we have lots to learn from others, our scriptures, and even our own anxiety. We won't go back to a church or world to the way it was. Our adaptability is key. Moses left what he knew and adapted to receive his call. We must also be adaptable during this pandemic. She ended her reflection with the ending of Our Creed - We are called to be the church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

The Chairperson for the Planning Team, Deborah Hoekstra, gave the closing prayer in both Dutch and English. Participants passed the peace in a virtual way and Leigh Sinclair closed with a blessing in French.

The Affirm Task Group began their time of education by introducing their purpose of preparing the Regional Council members to make a decision about becoming an affirming Regional Council, and also introducing some pertinent information for the remit. Members of the committee introduced themselves: Shylo Rosborough (Affirming Ministries Coordinator in Edmonton), Louise Rogers, Wilson MacLennan, Monica Rosborough and Cathy Kinsman. Monica began with a short prayer and then introduced their video, which was a skit performed by Monica and Cathy. Shylo thanked them. He then gave a brief history of Affirm United and the importance of the Affirm logo and the rainbow flag as symbols for safe churches. Because the Conference preceding Northern Spirit wasn't affirming before the restructure and none of its presbyteries were affirming, the new Regional Council must complete the full process to become Affirming. That process includes: encountering the need, discerning, embarking, engaging, documenting, deciding together and finally joining the Affirming, Canada wide family. In order for the affirming process to pass, it must be supported by three quarters of the delegates who vote.

Shylo then introduced poll questions that participants were asked to consider. The questions were:

- 1) Where in the affirming process do you see yourself?
- 2) Where do you think the readiness of the region is?
- 3) What are some of the ways you would be willing to engage in the regional process of becoming affirming.

Various choices to each question were offered and participants chose. The feedback will be used by the Affirming Task Group.

Louise Rogers then introduced the break out rooms and asked that each break-out room choose a recorder who will report that groups responses to the committee. Responses weren't shared that tonight. Shylo share the questions for the break-out rooms:

- 1) What did you learn that is new to you?
- 2) What do you wonder about? How do you feel about it?
- 3) What is God calling you to do next?

Recorders were asked to send their group's thoughts and responses to affirming.ministries@rwuc.org

Wilson MacLennan led the introduction to PIE

P is for public - How are you public about what and why you believe;

I is for Intentional - Many people believe all churches are inclusive, but that is not necessarily true. You need to be deliberate about including all in your community; add

E is for Explicit - Make sure the LGBTQAI community is welcome.

Monica Rosborough closed the Affirming Task Group's presentation with a prayer.

Britt Aerhart, Convenor of the Regional Gathering, thanked the task groups for their presentation and then asked Shannon McCarthy to introduce the remit. Shannon explained that the remit is the way General Council can ask a question of the church, usually about polity. This remit is a Category 1 remit which means it is for wording or editorial changes to the Basis of Union, including, replacing existing words or phrases with updated terms, and changing the gender language used for human beings in the Articles of Faith in the Basis of Union. Category 1

remit only go out to regional councils, who must reply that they are either in favour or not in favour of the remit. They may not include conditions or comments with their reply. If 2/3 of all regional councils reply that they have voted in favour of the remit, the General Council may declare that the remit has been approved. If you don't vote, it counts as a NO. There cannot be any changes to the remit, it is a yes or no vote. The remit question is:

Does the Regional Council agree that:

- (a) the Order of Ministry be open to persons of all gender identities; and
- (b) the basis of Union be amended to reflect this change as follows: **10.0 The Order of Ministry shall be open to persons of all gender identities.**

The Current wording is: **The Order of Ministry shall be open to both men and women.**

Shylo Rosborough shared why this language change is so important. Gender neutral language avoids bias toward gender and for people whose gender we don't know. The change from "men and women" to "all people" includes people of all gender types. Shylo then showed a short video to help explain what it means to be non-binary and the use of gender neutral pronouns. The wording of the remit was then shown on the screen for clarification. In response to a question from the court, it was explained that this is not a change in policy, but rather an updating of language.

Britt Aerhart clarified that the Affirm Task Group is on-going and will continue with their process that has just moved into the consulting part. This whole process will last for one to two years. On the other hand, the remit will be voted on next week in a properly constituted meeting. She then thanked those who were working behind the scenes to make this meeting happen.

In closing, Britt Aerhart extinguished each of the five candles as she said good night to the light of the four directions and the Christ light. Deborah Hoekstra, Chairperson for the Planning Team, gave the closing blessing in Dutch and English.