



Northern Spirit Regional Council
2nd Annual Meeting
Business Meeting (Deciding)
October 21, 2020

At 7:32 p.m., Britt Aerhart welcomed the (up to) 160 participants to the formal business session for the 2nd Annual Meeting of the Northern Spirit Regional Council. She introduced herself as the Convenor of the Annual Meeting, and reminded those gathered that this night is the formally constituted business meeting in order to receive annual accountability reports and to make decisions that have to be made as a whole body. Britt then reviewed the make up of the Regional Council (Ministry Personnel and elected Lay Representatives from communities of faith), outlined the purpose of the Regional Council as defined by The Manual (2019) in section C.2.4 (page 77), and formally declared the 2nd Annual Meeting of the Northern Spirit Regional Council to be constituted for worship, study, companionship and business. Britt acknowledged the land on which the Regional Council is located, and invited participants to record (in the chat box) the treaty territory where they live. She closed the meeting introduction with our call to be the church as reflected in the New Creed.

Britt then went over the instructions on how to vote, reviewing the phone instructions first, and then, how to choose the green ✓ or the red ✗ on the computer. To practice voting, there was a test motion: *Moved by Gord Waldie and seconded by Gord Waldie that, because 2020 has developed multiple insidious viruses, the Northern Spirit Regional Council move to immediately uninstall and reboot all main operating systems.* The motion was carried.

Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister, presented the Enabling Motions, seconded by Deborah Hoekstra. These motions were published as part of the Work Book on the Regional Council web page: <https://northernspiritr.ca/news/regional-council-meeting/>. During the discussion, there was a request to lift from the Enabling Motions, the motion to approve the minutes of the Inaugural Meeting. The Enabling Motions, without the motion regarding the minutes, were carried. It was moved by Catherine MacLean, seconded by Larry Wright, that approval of the minutes of the Inaugural Meeting be postponed indefinitely. This motion was carried, as well.

Gord Waldie, Chairperson of the Regional Council Executive led the Opening Worship. He began by showing a musical video Call to Worship, *Come, Let Us Worship/Bread for the Journey*, by Jim and Jean Strathdee. Susan Waldie led the Opening Prayer and the Prayer of Confession. Daniel Chon read the scripture passage from Genesis 4:1-9, about Cain and Abel. The Rev. Dr. Paul Douglas Walfall offered a short reflection. He spoke about how many leaders in society today are avoiding responding to the question of systemic racism, commenting that, “we can assume most Canadians don’t know if it is present”. He asked what racism is, and immediately assured folks that no one would be called racist tonight. But, he asserted that the uncomfortable conversation must be had, even if it goes against our Canadian niceness. Although this year the pandemic of COVID has been a top piece of conversation and news, the pandemic of racism has been around for more that 400 years, as exhibited by forced relocation of peoples, forced labour of peoples, and public ridicule of accents, among the many examples of racist actions.

Paul reiterated that racism is not about personal preference, but it is about power: the power of assumptions about someone you don't know. He then told about his hearing of the resignation of the current General Secretary, Nora Sanders and who might be considered to replace her. Most of the successors suggested were white. He asked, could a person of colour not be considered? When Cain reacted to God asking where his brother was, he responded from his feelings and felt called on his action not on the relational aspect of the question. God was asking about the relationship not the physical presence of his brother. So, Paul asked, how does this relate to racism? Where are you brothers and sisters? Who are your siblings? Language, accent or skin colour is not enough to discount us as being siblings in Christ. He asked us to be intentional in confronting racism in ourselves, confessing our humanity, and confronting our racist actions and programs. We need to acknowledge and correct our actions. And we need to constantly ask where and who are our siblings, and do something about it. We are called to be church and called to be our sibling's keeper in the journey to anti-racism. At its conclusion, Paul Douglas Walfall was thanked for his reflection.

Gord Waldie then shared a prayer that included the memorials, and the celebrations of new ministries. We remembered folks who have died since the last meeting of the Regional Council: Basil Henderson, Margaret-Ann Armour, David Loper, Bryan Davidson, Terry Forbes, Glen Simmonds, Jack Colclough, Peter Lim, Alvin Stenson and George Takashima. Gord celebrated the beginning of a new Community of Faith, Living Spirit United Church in Drayton Valley, and the recognition of a new minister in our midst, the Rev. John Rhoad Jr., who has been admitted to the Order of Ministry of The United Church of Canada from the Presbyterian Church, USA. He also recognised three people who have retired from active ministry: the Rev. Mary Annan, the Rev. Edith Harnden and the Rev. David Wasyk. Gord lifted prayers of concern for the Goodfish Lake and Saddle Lake communities and the people in the Mi'kmaq territory of Nova Scotia, and invited folks to name their individual prayer concerns. Gord Waldie, Sharon Adams and Susan Waldie led the gathering in a communion service. At its conclusion, Britt Aerhart thanked Gord, Sharon and Susan for their worship service.

A question was asked about when minutes from the Executive, and the Property and Pastoral Relations Commissions would be made available to the public. Shannon McCarthy responded that we are almost ready to post the Regional Council Executive minutes on the Regional Council web site. Minutes from the Property and Pastoral Relations Commissions won't be posted, but their actions are reported to the Executive and will be included as an appendix to the Executive minutes.

Britt turned chairing over to Gord Waldie, Chairperson of the Regional Council Executive, so that she could give her Convenor's Report. In addition to her written report included in the Work Book, Britt reported on some of the highlights she experienced as Convenor, a role that concluded at the end of the Annual Meeting. She encouraged folks to consider offering themselves for this role, as a new Convenor had not yet been named. Britt expressed her hope for more diversity in future leadership.

The Chair was returned to Britt, so that Gord Waldie could give his report. He acknowledged that he had no real report because he only took over from Ruth Lumax in June. Gord shared thoughts from Ruth: that she was grateful for her time as Chairperson of the Executive, and

offered her appreciation for the conversations she had, and the people with whom she worked. Ruth thanked the staff for their help. Gord had little to add except that he hopes to have a newsletter posted each month shortly after each Executive meeting. He thanked Ruth and Britt.

Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister, reminded folks of her written report in the Work Book, and added her thanks to the members of the Executive, to Britt and Ruth, as well as to the staff for all their hard work and diligence.

A question was asked about a Regional Council Directory. There won't be a directory published. Instead folks were encouraged to become familiar with the directory on the United Church web site, and to get information there. Ministry Personnel changes were included in the Pastoral Relations Status Report found in the Work Book. Deborah Hoekstra announced that she would be putting her name forward as the Chairperson of the Annual Meeting Planning Team.

Heather Dootoff, Financial Administrator, offered the Finance Report as Shauna Scott, Northern Spirit Treasurer, was not able to be in attendance. The audited 2019 Financial Statement was published in the Annual Meeting Work Book. However, it was discovered that the information about the Living into Right Relationships Trust Fund on page 9 does not reflect recent history. Conversation is being held with the auditor about making a correction to the document.

2019 operations resulted in a surplus of \$70,382, plus the one-time transfer of assets of \$882,293 from the former Alberta and Northwest Conference and its presbyteries (including the Ann Mazur Fund). 2019 was an unusual year due to the transition to the Regional Council structure, and 2020 is proving to be unusual as well, thanks to the COVID pandemic and other factors. We have been notified that the 2021 Mission and Ministry grant will be cut by \$49,000, but it appears that the Regional Council will end up with a surplus in 2020, which can be used to offset the cut in 2021.

Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister, reviewed Remit 1, amending Basis of Union Article 10.0. She reminded the court that no changes can be made to the wording of the Remit, and that the Regional Council could only respond yes or no to the proposed change. The question was called: "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 Remit was approved.

Britt Aerhart, Convenor of the Annual Meeting, thanked the planners for tonight's meeting; Blaine Gregg for being the Parliamentarian, and all those working behind the scene as well as all the staff. Gord Waldie, Chairperson of the Executive, shared where he saw highlights from tonight's meeting: that gendered language is not as inclusive as it may need to be; that from Paul, we learned about who gets to be seen and who doesn't; that God continues to call us to relationship and account; and that God asks, "who and where are your relational siblings" and that we need to carry this reflection forward.

Sharon Adams led the closing prayer and ended the evening by inviting everyone to join her in singing, *Go Now in Peace*, by Natalie Sleeth (VU964). The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 p.m.