

**Minutes of Northern Spirit Regional Council
2nd Annual Regional Meeting via Zoom
October 14, 2020 & October 21, 2020**

Wednesday, October 14, 2020

Gathering of Regional Council The 2020 Regional Meeting of Northern Spirit Regional Council of the United Church of Canada met for two sessions on Wednesday, October 14, 2020 and Wednesday, October 21, 2020 via Zoom.

The first session was a learning opportunity and a time to “Listen, Discern, and Discuss” with (up to) 151 participants present. The second session was the formal business session and was focused on “Deciding.” There were (up to) 160 participants to the formal business session for the 2nd Annual Meeting of the Northern Spirit Regional Council.

Britt Aerhart, Convenor of the 2020 Northern Spirit Regional Council Regional Meeting, presided during both sessions.

Introductions Britt Aerhart introduced Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister; Gord Waldie, Chairperson of the Regional Council Executive, Deborah Hoekstra, Planning Team Chairperson; and Kathy Jackson, Registrar.

Opening Worship The Worship began with a moment of silence followed by a Treaty Land Acknowledgement. Britt Aerhart read a Four Directions Prayer and lit five candles. Those gathering recited the Lord’s Prayer and scripture was read by three people in three languages: Lloyd Nyarota in Shona, Jun-Hyok Chon in Korean, and Cathy Kinsman in English.

Britt offered a pondering and reflected on the theme for this year’s meeting, “Called To Be.” Britt ended her reflection with the ending of Our Creed. Deborah Hoekstra gave a closing prayer in both Dutch and English. Participants passed the peace in a virtual way and Leigh Sinclair closed with a blessing in French.

EDUCATION

Affirm Task Group 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.

The members of the task group introduced themselves: Shylo Rosborough (Affirming Ministries Coordinator in Edmonton), Louise Rodgers, Wilson MacLennan, Monica Rosborough, and Cathy Kinsman.

Shylo Rosborough have us a brief history of Affirm United and the importance of the Affirm logo and rainbow flag. We learned about the process to become Affirming.

We were asked to consider poll questions, which were:

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

Feedback from these questions will be used by the Affirming Task Group. Recorders were asked to forward their group's thoughts and responses.

Those gathered were divided into break out rooms and discussed the following:

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?

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

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

DISCUSS / DISCERN

Remit 1 (Discuss / Discern)

Shannon McCarthy explained the Category 1 remit. 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 a video was shown to help explain what it means to be non-binary.

Closing (Session 1)

Britt Aerhart closed the first session by saying good night and to the light of the four directions and the Christ light and extinguished the five candles. Deborah Hoekstra gave the closing blessing in Dutch and English.

Wednesday, October 21, 2020

Opening

Britt Aerhart welcome those gathering and read the five points of purpose of Northern Spirit Regional Council, reminding us the regional council is a collective voice of all our scattered ministries, and yet we have a very specific purpose.

Five Points of Purpose:

1. To witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society;
2. Encouraging local, national and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical and interfaith) for ministry, mission and justice work;
3. Encouraging ministry with children, youth and young adults;
4. Honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry; and
5. Living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community.

Britt Aerhart declared the opening of the Northern Spirit Regional Council Meeting 2020 to be open at 7:30 PM with the following statement:

“Welcome one and all. In the name of Jesus Christ, the only head of the church, and by the authority vested in me by this regional council, I declare the 2nd Annual Meeting of Northern Spirit Regional Council of the United Church of Canada open for worship, study, companionship, and such business as shall properly come before us.”

Acknowledgement of Treaty Territory

Britt Aerhart made the following treaty territory acknowledgement:

“As we gather to share the work that rightly comes before this court, let us acknowledge Treaty No. 6, Treaty No. 8, and Treaty No. 11. We acknowledge the ongoing relationship to the land which Indigenous people have had for generation upon generation. We acknowledge those traditional territories that fall both within and outside the treaty lands that we are on. We also recognize our mutual obligation to care for and respect the land and its people; and to be open to the Creator's teaching and wisdom which the land offers.”

We each used the chat box as we were able to type the treaty territory in which we were in during this gathering.

Britt Aerhart invited us to remember the Call the Church and we spoke the words of the New Creed.

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Britt Aerhart welcomed the regional council to the second session of the 2nd annual Northern Spirit Regional Council 2020 Regional Meeting. The 2020 regional meeting is the first meeting held entirely online or by phone.

Britt went over the agenda and invited us to gather together in a spirit of hospitality and grace with each other. We hope to find patience as we make our way through a new way of worshiping and gathering.

Introduction to Voting Process Britt Aerhart explained the voting process for those in attendance by phone and by Zoom.

Procedural / Enabling Motions Shannon McCarthy read the procedural and enabling motions.

Enabling Motions NSRC 001-2020 Shannon McCarthy / Deborah Hoekstra
That Northern Spirit Regional Council accept the following Enabling Motions #1 – 10 for this Regional Council meeting:

1. **Roll of the Regional Council:**
That the Roll of the Regional Council for the purposes of the 2nd Annual Regional Council meeting be:
 - i. The members of the Order of Ministry within the bounds served by the regional council; and
 - ii. Other ministry personnel in a covenantal relationship with a community of faith within the bounds of the regional council
 - iii. Lay members of the regional council are members of the United Church who are not ministry personnel and who are elected by communities of faith. (Manual 2019, C.1.1 & C.1.2)
 - iv. Members-at-large, lay members within the Regional Council who have been appointed as members necessary for the work of the Regional Council by the Regional Council Executive and who have not been elected by their community of faith.
2. **Corresponding Members:**
That all invited guests, registered guests, and staff be corresponding members of this Regional Council meeting, with voice but not vote.
3. **The Bounds of the Council:**
That the Bounds of the Regional Council meeting be the virtual meeting room and the telephone connections to that meeting space.
4. **Minimum Number of Members at Meetings:**
That the Regional Council may meet only if a minimum number of members is present. If there are 60 or more members, at least 20 members must be present; and there must be at least one ministry personnel and one lay member who is not ministry personnel present. Corresponding members are not counted for this purpose. (Manual 2019; C.4.3)
5. **Limits to Debate:**

That without the permission of the Council, no member shall speak more than once on any proposal or amendment; and that speeches be limited to two minutes per person on each proposal, except at the discretion of the Convenor.

6. Business Committee:

That the Business Committee for this Regional Council meeting be the members of the Regional Council Meeting Planning Committee, plus Blaine Gregg, who is designated as the Parliamentarian.

7. Rules of Debate and Order:

That the rules of debate and order for Parliamentary debate be those spelled out in the Appendix of The Manual 2019 (pages 187-191); and that any point not covered in such Appendix, the parliamentary rules accepted in Canada (Bourinot) shall be followed.

8. Unfinished Business:

That unfinished business be referred to the Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive.

9. Celebration of Ministry:

That the Northern Spirit Regional Council, having received confirmation of readiness of the following candidate for admission from the Office of Vocation, and confirmed through the Northern Spirit Regional Council Pastoral Relations Commission that a covenantal relationship is in place with a community of faith, will hold a Celebration of Ministries service on a date and time to be determined by the Regional Council Executive to Admit John Calvin Rhoad Jr. (The Manual H.4.8).

10. Reports:

That the verbal and written reports be accepted as presented.

CARRIED

Tabling of 2019 regional meeting minutes

Since the minutes were not available until recently, it was requested that the minutes from the 2019 Inaugural meeting of Northern Spirit Regional Council meeting be lifted from the Order Paper and tabled until the next meeting.

NSRC 002-2020

Catherine MacLean / Larry Wright

That Northern Spirit Regional Council postpone the approval of the Minutes of the 2019 Inaugural Meeting of the Northern Spirit Regional Council definitely until the next meeting.

CARRIED

Opening Worship

Gord Waldie gave Words of Gathering and lit the Christ Candle to remind us of the presence of God in our midst. Susan Waldie read an Opening Prayer / Prayer of Confession. Daniel Chon read the scripture passage from Genesis 4:2–9. The Rev. Dr. Paul Douglas Walfall offered a short reflection.

In Memoriam

We remembered those who are no longer with us since the last regional council meeting:

- ◇ *Margaret-Ann Armour*
- ◇ *Jack Calclough*
- ◇ *Bryan Davidson*
- ◇ *Terry Forbes*
- ◇ *Basil Henderson*
- ◇ *Peter Lim*
- ◇ *David Loper*
- ◇ *Glen Simmonds*
- ◇ *Alvin Stenson*
- ◇ *George Takashima*

Welcome to Living Spirit

We paused to celebrate the beginning of a new community of faith, Living Spirit United Church in Drayton Valley. We welcome them into the larger community known as Northern Spirit Regional Council and the larger community known as the United Church of Canada.

Welcome Rev. John Rhoad Jr.

We acknowledged, the Rev. John Rhoad Jr., who will be admitted to the Order of Ministry of The United Church of Canada from the Presbyterian Church, USA, when COVID-19 restrictions allow.

Retirees

We recognized three people who have retired from active ministry:

- ◇ *Rev. Mary Annan*
- ◇ *Rev. Edith Harnden*
- ◇ *Rev. David Wasyk*

We thank them for all their years of service and wish blessings on them as they discover what new challenges might be in store for them.

Celebrations and concerns

Gord Waldie named the people of Goodfish and Saddle Lake who have been overwhelmed by several deaths in their communities. We share prayers for the Sipekne'katik First Nation, members of the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, and their right as Indigenous Canadians to fish off-season.

Gord Waldie, Sharon Adams and Susan Waldie led us in communion. Britt Aerhart thanked Gord, Sharon and Susan for their worship service and thanked the Rev. Dr. Paul Walfall for his reflection.

REPORTS

Convenor

Gord Waldie assumed the chair.

Britt Aerhart highlighted some of her experiences as Convenor and encouraged people to consider putting their names forward for the role of the convenor of the 2021 meeting.

The 2020 Northern Spirit Regional Council Annual Gathering was originally planned to take place in Camrose, Alberta. A contract was signed with Augustana Campus, University of Alberta, anticipating attendance of 250 people. The working theme was "Called To Be" and a logo was being discussed.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the course of the annual gathering and it was decided that we would hold the gathering online in order to comply with guidelines regarding large-group gatherings. Many of the original planning team did not continue after the original meeting date was cancelled.

Britt gave thanks for the honour of serving as Convenor for the regional council. She hopes that the next convenor will represent the diversity of the church. Britt Aerhart assumed the chair.

Executive Chairperson

Ruth Lumax was Chairperson of the Transition Commission and remained as the Executive Chairperson until what would have been the rise of the annual meeting in June 2020. Ruth handed the role of Executive Chairperson to Gord Waldie in June 2020.

Gord Waldie read a report submitted by Ruth Lumax. Ruth expressed their gratitude for the people with whom they served and for the trust and support offered by the Northern Spirit Regional Council.

Gord joined the executive in March 2020 and had a very short period of learning before he was chairing the executive himself. The position of chair-elect remains open. The nominations committee is working on filling this position.

We hope to someday have face-to-face meetings again but until face-to-face meetings become a possibility, we will continue to hold all meetings online via Zoom. Gord thanked Ruth Lumax both as Chairperson of the Transition Commission and of the Executive. Ruth put in many hours in helping to get our new structure started.

Gord also thanked Britt Aerhart for her work as Convenor in what became a very unique year to be the convenor of the annual meeting as well as planning our first meeting that took place entirely online.

Executive Minister

Shannon McCarthy thanked the Executive for all their hard work since the inaugural meeting. Shannon also thanked Ruth Lumax, Gord Waldie and Britt Aerhart for their leadership and diligent work on behalf of the regional council.

Shannon gave special thanks to the regional staff, tri-regional staff, and the regional staff from the other regions, Living Skies and Prairie to Pine. Kathy Jackson is joined by Cherry Abad from Prairie to Pine and Bev Diebert and Kent Mohn from Living Skies as they work behind the scenes to keep these meetings running smoothly.

Julie Graham began as Justice and Communications Minister at the start of January 2020. Shannon was on sabbatical at the time, so Julie did a fantastic job of navigating her new position.

Earl Reaburn took on the role of Acting Executive Minister while Shannon was away on sabbatical. We thank Earl for his leadership during the beginning of a stressful and unknown time.

Shannon acknowledged Heather Dootoff, Financial Administrator for Living Skies and Prairie to Pine as well as Northern Spirit, who has responded to a large number of financial questions and helped facilitate funding in a variety of ways.

Until spring of 2020, most of the meetings held by the executive were held by Zoom. In some ways, this helped us make the move into a digital meeting space.

The long-anticipated website was up and running at the beginning of March 2020. Thank you to Julie Graham, Kathy Jackson and Jamie Mckay for populating the website with material and handling the technical aspects. The website was up and running just in time as the COVID-19 pandemic started and we collectively entered into lockdown.

*Regional Council
Directory*

At this time, we will not be maintaining an online directory for the regional council. We will use the online directory for communities of faith and ministry personnel that is currently maintained by General Council.

Finance

Heather Dootoff, Financial Administrator for Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and Prairie to Pine Regional Councils, gave a financial report. Shauna Scott, Northern Spirit Regional Council Treasurer, was unable to attend the meeting.

The audited financial statements are included in the Work Book. There is a correction to be noted on page 9 of the financial report. The description of the Living into Right Relations Fund is out date. A 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-19 pandemic. 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.

Remit 1

Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister, reviewed Remit 1, amending Basis of Union Article 10.0. She reminded the court that this is a Category One Remit and 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 person of all gender identities.”

The Remit was approved.

Commissioning and Closing Prayer / Benediction

Britt Aerhart thanked the planners of this meeting, those who worked behind the scenes, and to Blaine Gregg for being the Parliamentarian.

Gord Waldie gave a short reflection on highlights of tonight’s meeting.

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).

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 PM.

Gord Waldie, Chairperson

Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister