



Northern Spirit Regional Council
3rd Annual Meeting
Session 1 - Listening, Discerning
May 4, 2021 at 7:00pm

Gord Waldie, Chairperson for the Regional Council Executive and Convenor of the 3rd Annual Meeting of Northern Spirit Regional Council, called the meeting of about 150 participants to order at 7:00 pm, for the purposes of worship, study, and business. He acknowledged that this gathering was taking place on land known as Treaty 6, 8 and 11 and that “some come from families that have been here for a short time and others from families that have been here for centuries”. In his opening remarks, Gord spoke of the fifteen months of the pandemic and of the new restrictions announced just today. He gave thanks for God and for that presence being with us through it.

Gord then invited Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister, to present the enabling motions. Shannon began with a practice vote. In response to the question, “Do we want to let Mari (Shannon’s puppy) out of the crate?”, delegates were asked to raise their electronic hands to vote. Participants voted and Mari was let out of the crate for a quick visit. Shannon then moved the enabling motions as an omnibus motion, with Katharine Moore seconding. The motion was carried.

Gord introduced Katharine Moore, Business Convenor, and Deborah Hoekstra, Chairperson for the Annual Meeting Planning Committee. Deborah acknowledged the members of her committee: Gord Waldie, Sharon Adams, Shylo Rosborough, Linda McLaren, Monica Rosborough, Stuart Jackson, Julie Graham and Kathy Jackson.

Gord then invited the Affirming Task Group to lead the Opening Worship. Linda McLaren, Task Group Chairperson, presided over the lighting the candle and Cathy Kinsman opened the Worship with prayer. After the singing of *Creator God, You Gave us Life* (MV27), Monica Rosborough and Linda McLaren lead the Prayer of Confession. Linda read the scripture passage from Acts 8:26-40; the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Linda and Cathy gave a reflection on the reading from the point of view of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Linda shared a memory of hers from childhood about how many stars there were. So many they filled the sky and filled her with wonder, and she knew was not alone. After she moved to Vancouver, one evening as she looked to the sky, she realized she had quit expecting to see stars, and God. Following the story, Linda spoke the Prayer of Inclusion.

Shylo Rosborough shared two videos. The first was recorded by Ruth Lumax, Regional Council Chairperson when the Inaugural Meeting decided to begin the process of becoming an Affirming Regional Council. Ruth welcomed all - including: gender diverse, colored (black, white, pink) and those who love and hate technology. They reiterated that we are all part of some of the people God calls. The second video was from Rose and Tim, who defined transgendered and non-binary for those gathered. Rosa, a transgendered person, talked about her experience of acceptance at her church, and then they discussed the importance of pronouns. They closed with a quote by Alan Alda, who said, “Real listening is a willingness to let the other person change you.”

Shylo introduced RW Hoekstra, who offered a sort of smudge for the 'circle', before he spoke about his journey in the 2-Spirited LGBT2S community, telling those gathered that the most damaging scripture passage was I Corinthians 6:9-11: words that were hurtful to him, and which, as a youth, felt like they spoke directly to him. More recently, he has discovered that he has many circles to him, but several don't mix. Stories that he could relate to were in movies, and that's when he felt a real faith. RW told of how grateful he was to his parents, and that as a child they allowed him to be himself. But as he grew, RW became careful to protect himself from others. In the 1970s, there was a redefining of himself, when he learned more about being 2-Spirited. He tried to learn to balance his Christianity and his aboriginal cultural, asking many questions. How does it work to be two-spirited? Where is the church that looks after the spiritual needs of the LGBT2S community? Why do you need permission to be accepted in the church? Why, in 2020-2021, do we need to be in consensus to be in community with the LGBT2S community? Why do we have to have stickers on the doors? Why isn't the church automatically Affirming? RW advised that we need to open our arms and accept our LGBT2S youth, because their life is not easy. He went on to encourage us to speed up acceptance for youth who need spiritual nurturing, to speed up the talking. Times are changing. No one person has a monopoly on faith. Jesus and Paul didn't wait, or talk through things forever. RW concluded his reflection by saying, "our work, is to speed up the work. We are losing youth and the damage being done is great!!" Shylo thanked RW for his powerful words.

Gord Waldie thanked Linda and the Affirming Task Group, and the business portion began, a time for listening and discussing proposals before the vote to be held the following Thursday night, May 6.

Delegates were advised that Thursday night would also include the election of 11 Commissioners to the 44th General Council, in addition to Gord Waldie, who was elected by virtue of his office as Annual Meeting Convenor. At least, one third of the 12 delegates (4 people) must be Ministry Personnel and at least one third must be lay people. Up to 11 people could be selected from the ballot distributed through JotForm. Gord invited Katharine Moore to call for introductions to each of the five proposals. The texts of the Proposals can be viewed in Annual Meeting Materials section of the Workbook posted on the [Annual Meeting](#) page of the Regional Council web site.

The first proposal, *Community of Faith Meeting Quorum*, was introduced by Blaine Gregg. It proposed that the 44th General Council consider that an addition be made to section B.5.5 of The Manual to add attendance of the Community of Faith Ministry Personnel or Pastoral Charge Supervisor to the list of persons required for quorum at a meeting of the Community of Faith.

The second proposal, *Commemorate Emancipation Sunday*, was introduced by Paul Walfall. It proposed that the 44th General Council designate the first Sunday in August each year to be observed as Emancipation Sunday in The United Church of Canada, and that Communities of Faith and Regional Councils be encouraged to share worship resources and liturgies developed for this event.

The third proposal, *Response from the Northern Spirit Regional Council to the Incidences of Racial Violence and Hatred in Alberta*, was also introduced by Paul Walfall. It proposed that the Executive write a letter decrying the recent cases of racism and hatred in the province, that it create an Anti-Racism Task Group to encourage and educate the Regional Council and Communities of Faith to seek ways to live out the church's commitment to becoming intercultural and anti-racist, to work with the General Council Anti-Racism Common Table, seek to network with other organizations working on anti racism within the boundaries of the Regional Council and beyond and encourage communities of faith to do the same, and to report to the next meeting of the Regional Council on its work.

The fourth proposal, *Expressing Deep Concerns with the Proposed Alberta K-6 Curriculum*, was introduced by Erin Hickman. It proposed that the Regional Council send a public letter to the government of Alberta expressing grave concerns with the curriculum as proposed and deep disappointment with the failure to live up to the Joint Commitment to Action, that it encourage Communities of Faith and the people of the Regional Council to send their own letters of concern to the government of Alberta and local school boards, and that it make appropriate supporting resources for education and discernment available.

The fifth and final proposal, *Criteria and Authority for a Regional Council to End a Pastoral Relationship*, was introduced by Helen Reed. It proposed that the 44th General Council reconsider the Pastoral Relations policy of The United Church of Canada to include criteria and authority, allowing the Regional Council to end a pastoral relationship without undue delay when it is deemed to be dysfunctional by the Regional Council.

After the proposals were introduced, the delegates were placed into small groups to discuss the proposals. Groups were asked to email their questions for clarification or suggestions for change, to the Regional Council Office, for submission to the Business Committee for review and edit of the proposals.

As the Session neared its end, Deborah Hoekstra reminded folks to bring their Communion elements for worship on Thursday evening. Gord reviewed the voting process to elect Commissioners to the 44th General Council. Cathy Kinsmen, a member of the Affirming Task Group, closed the meeting with prayer.

Gord Waldie, Convenor, adjourned the Session at 9:34 pm.