

**Record of small group questions and responses, NSRC annual meeting,  
October 14 and 15, 2022**

**Friday night groups**

**Question 1: How has the church proved to be vital or not?**

Struggled with the challenges of doing emergency pastoral care and in the past dropping by has been the process. Whereas now hospital protocol is challenging, having to call ahead to ensure no Covid outbreak. Managing things seems to be the theme throughout Covid, an emphasis on ‘just getting by’

TIRED

One step forward – one step back

Church needs a yearlong Sabbath

Before retirement four pastoral charges, and elder congregations so there was a challenge with providing Zoom, so had to adapt to calling folks, which created a greater sense of community.

Church was still vital so more pastoral care was being done

Waiting for funerals and the challenges for families with the grieving process

Arrived during Covid and when a minister had not been there for a couple years – people seem to be excited to be gathering

It hasn't been easy

Real anxiety for some folks that people were really worried about dying

Shift from Zoom to YouTube to create easier access, cycle of people getting comfortable then not comfortable depending on what was happening, then the cycle would repeat

Felt as Christians there was a unity of purpose

Really missed coffeetime – wasn't able to hear people's stories

The fellowship had to really shift

Momentum in small group ministry and groups has really shifted, for example UCW

The number of volunteers has really dwindled

The time and energy to get things going is a real struggle

We don't know what is going to become relevant...long term stuff seems more challenging to track (watching church at home)

Some communities seem to still be in trauma, so this conversation felt challenging

Did individual communion, didn't distribute, one person handing out instead of people serving themselves

Lack of connection, churches don't seem to be talking, lament about not being fed by worship

Tried to be outside church when the opportunity presented itself

Really hard for folks to start thinking in different ways, for example, weddings where folks wanted to invite 300, were only allowed 10. Create a new mindset as things were changing quickly. Things would go from bad to worse, then back to the new normal

Surprised that it has not been as vital as I imagined it would be

Still reaching out to some of our members who have not yet returned

Felt a bit disconnected because of changing circumstances – Harder to get to know people in her new congregation

Had already been there for 5 years so knew folks. Looking forward to restarting SS. Part of moving forward is restarting some of the things of the past

Curious to know what is intended by the definition of vital. I think the experience varied for churches who did online – had tech ability.

Folks like the flexibility of online worship. Still have 30 people checking in online. Some folks have gone elsewhere and for some church has been vital. And some have just dropped away.

People have found other ways to do their grieving work

A live stream at the cemetery!

The experience of restricted numbers during covid – how difficult it was to make those decisions. And yet there have been 770 people viewing the taping. In some sense, the live streaming is allowing many more people to connect. In one way the church has been vital because we reached people through zoom but they are not coming through our doors.

Opportunity to do different activities on zoom – easier access to meetings because they are accessible online. Consideration of impact when we expect people to drive to a meeting, especially in wintertime darkness and icy conditions.

Experience of taping a eulogy and sending it to a service for a family member – things that became possible because of the embrace of technology

The flexibility of being able to take a meeting at home

Appreciated the times during the pandemic when we could gather

On zoom and other platforms so much that going to church on screen did not work.

Having interest groups meet provided connection.

online worship did not maintain engagement, online meetings are not the same as when one can be in the same room with others, communication is not only verbal.

Zoom allowed people who were members but relocated could now join and be part of a community of faith with which they were familiar

Online tech have more resources and strategies to connect

Able to keep in touch as a small group rather than individual phone calls

Forced to update tech and learn how to use it. People from a distance can participate in funeral, marriage

Wide variety of capacity to use the technology; people with lots of family responsibilities saw domestic demands ramp up and consumed energy to participate in community/connection.

Have become reliant on distributing information electronically which leaves people out

Church used the postal service to connect with those who were not connected online

A couple of bulletins a week from the minister, sharing thoughts and not only business

Lost two years, just as we were learning the new Church structure

Hard to know what decisions a community of faith had authority to make

Raised awareness of how congregations can continue ministry and mission and connection without a bricks and mortar facility

Learned to be patient with technology

Some people attend many services across the denomination and even beyond.

two small churches older members. Used to do things in the community now this is difficult. One church has been sold. It is a struggle. A church has been able to stay connected due to ministry personnel being

comfortable with technology. There are those who have not returned to coming to church because they prefer using technology. Live stream and You-tube. Many of connected with churches in many places. We do not want to lose our personnel connections. Some people find they can hear better with You-tube. Coffee hour on Zoom. It is hard for churches that do not have ministry. Finding a minister is a challenge. Do people who watch on-line contribute financially to the congregation. There are differences in how people interpret the Covid restrictions.

What do we mean by church? not the building? building? region? community of faith? living body of Christ?

Wondering about regional lines not lining up with provincial borders when provincial health orders were in place? Wondering if we should be with Chinook Winds and Pacific Mountain (not Living Skies and Prairie to Pine)

Covid showed the cracks. cracks got pushed. 70% + eager to get vaccinated, but a vocal minority believed it was poison etc. How to get past the division within the community. Church didn't create it but impacted by it.

Trying to keep church as a place where all felt welcome despite differences of opinion re vaccines

Membership no longer defined by location.

live streaming, using etransfer helped to keep us strong.

struggling with people saying when everything "gets back to the way it was" it will be fine. It never will go back. What are the elements you are missing? What do you want to retrieve/retain?

People aware we're in this together

Despite challenges, people have been very supportive in new structure.

Miss some of the community experiences and support of former presbyteries, and person-to-person gathering.

There is support in the region if you know who to ask. Need more communication about how to find support.

Will need to find new ways to come together, to share information and resources, though probably not in person. Example - workshop in Chinook, suggest programs as a possibility for gathering.

Focused on effects of pandemic within congregations - some still on line, some programs still on line - some of this has become new opportunities for people to connect - this won't go away. At the same time, excitement for some about being able to gather again.

Issue during pandemic of financial support - what was already a problem has intensified for some during pandemic. For others, have managed to maintain levels of support, especially from core supporters. Some successful fundraising projects.

Issues arising during pandemic has led to visioning about what the future will look like. In this, finding support in region will be important.

Issues re communication - need succinct, useful information, but not information overload.

Issue of aging congregations named by some.

Concern about ecumenical and interfaith links.

Experience of communities of faith being more accountable in relation to covenant with regional council.

There was division during the pandemic, with those who wanted to go back and others were more cautious. Hard part has been not being able to connect with one another.

Having to use Zoom was a new thing that was embraced. Concern for those who could not connect through Zoom. technology in place for live streaming. It can be good and bad. we miss those who are not with us in person.

In one case, there was a new pastoral charge that had been formed. Online connections brought some people from far away. Younger generation are online, while the older generation are in person.

There is a change in the community. Some people have not returned. In one case the Sunday School has disappeared.

how are we defining ever shifting - transition, covid, forever

become very individualistic even before restructure, only starting to reach out now

only closed during mandated, masked until recently, no transmissions yet, only half attending

interesting to see difference in points within a charge

churches closed out of health care centre completely - tried video and phone

some churches connected on zoom with people who didn't normally attend ... shut ins or moved

hard time getting clarification on rules about visiting facilities, lost participants from list of churches who share healthcare services

numbers running at 40 or 50 %, not sure how things will shake out in the end

pandemic and new minister at the same time

vital to the people who are attending

supported people who lost loved ones during covid

society needs special times, celebration, closure and community, not just in churches

covid fast tracked things that were happening anyway - alternatives to weddings and funerals, some of which may be more meaningful to those involved

others experiences were different, more weddings, lots of gravesides

people's comfort level with risk - some won't go out, lots resist masks

feel like it takes family longer to get over a death without the service

gravesides could still have meaning to family, funeral homes bringing more equipment, even livestreaming

People connected virtually - sometimes new faces.

Noticed a drop in on-line as well as in person. People with a desire for something. Volunteerism on regional exec has provided some good links to the wider church. Numbers dropped during pandemic, but fact that services continued provided an important connection, drawing strength from that.

Geography has lead to a sense of isolation. Once folks have gotten out of the habit of attending, they didn't come back.

sponsoring a student was new and exciting opportunity

zoom has been a real help, when couldn't meet in person, recorded a service and load to facebook and saw new names accessing it; added technology moved onto youtube; online move was a blessing - could still watch even though no longer able to attend due to age or health;

Initial Notes (although not added initially!)

1) This group had a free-flowing conversation that addressed all the questions in one way or another, but the discussion is not recorded in a way that it can be assigned to a particular heading.

2) It's hard to keep these notes non-specific - you might be able to figure out where these comments are coming from. I hope that is okay. I am not identifying the participants, even though you might figure out who they are.

We miss the in person contact of meetings, the body language etc.

We tell stories of how technology limits human relationship...

When we started meeting on-line we took away the fun part of meetings and mostly took the social times out of meetings. We focused on business and shortened our time together. We were not good at re-imagining the way that meetings could still be good and life giving.

Virtual meeting is healthier for the planet - can it be healthy for us too?

Moving into a new ministry in a time of pandemic. Hard to get to know people. Moving to a place where virus was not as prevalent. Church was vital because of the blessing of not being required to close or meet online.

Compare church to magnetic force: repel and attract. Some things were stronger. Fire in a church: people were sad, church lost money but it was also a time that can be said to be the best time in many years of ministry. People helped out, refugee sponsorship. We will see how the time of Covid looks after we are past it for a few years.

Relied on work of a secretary during the pandemic, to keep communication going. Now back to two services per month. Membership dwindled. Enjoyment at being back to in person worship. Outreach continued during Covid.

This participant was in kind of a post-church frame of mind - not sure that church was all that vital or necessary - things the church did before were being done in different and perhaps better ways. But - surprise, surprise - attending church in person again has been energizing and it's good to sing in community again. Possible T-Shirt: It's not Karaoke, It's Church!

Virtual worship is here to stay - if not forever, then for several years.

Talking about discerning shared ministry with a Lutheran community of faith.

Communication was key during the pandemic.

what have we missed? Meeting in person... want to see body language, body-to-body, face-to-face.

Missing friendships. Using a computer at a table used to be considered rude/blocking relationships.

Now almost everything is online and complaints are less. Presbytery -- comradary, gathering. Question about face-to-face for 2023 in NSR. Human contact. The social aspects of meetings has been lost -- we've lost social connections. Both online and inperson meetings can be boring.

The online meetings have also been lifegiving connections, better for the planet.

Minister felt supported by their pastoral charge

Felt supported by local ministerial, the whole body of Christ

Layperson felt supported by the relationships within the congregation

Connections across geography made possible by online worship was new and life-giving

Pastoral relationship began with patience and grace (for a minister entering into Canada)

Sharing with others and receiving from others in the church context; grace in reciprocity

The support of home and neighbourhood were wonderful

Congregation and board were hugely helpful

Online connection continues to feel like a real connection, especially for those who can't attend in person

The ability to find global collegiality was new and wonderfully Spirit-filled; we are not alone

The love of God came through the church to many individuals

World Council of Churches connections have been inspiring

The church has not always proved vital to the people that you might have most expected it to, i.e. lifelong members who have drifted away from church

Others have found the church to be vital after a long time away or having had no previous church experience prior to the pandemic

We have been doing vital work in long-term care facilities, especially where few clergy from other denominations are vaccinated

Baptisms in May with three different families who had three different ways of connecting with the community; we are being invited to reimagine our shared life.

Vitality: Arrival in a northern community in August of 2020. Hard to get to know community. COVID felt less threatening in the far North than in the South. Had in-person worship all the way through COVID... had space to mask and distance. The church was a grounding support during the time. Felt blessed to be able to do that.

Congregation spirit contained opposites... when we had a fire a few years ago we met in a community Hall - coming together in crisis. Still can't identify how the pandemic has affected the congregation long time. Technology was a challenge for some and resulted in them staying away from church may take a couple of years to recover.

Reliance on secretary to communicate -- including phoning people. Are back to two services per month, but returning is slow. Not everyone is comfortable returning with/without masks. Community outreach continued following all the regulations/masking etc. Are looking for more Board members to help guide the way forward. COVID may have precipitated lack of Board members.

Retired. Not attending church had become a way of life and found that there were things easier to let go of than anticipated. Returning to worship attendance has re-invigorated spirit, singing, getting together again.

Helped with the isolation that some folks felt during the pandemic through zoom, cards, phone calls

The National church is out of touch with rural communities

Our individual churches actually have done well during the Covid stopping.

Tofield has grown and is more vibrant now.

The Edmonton church moved from being a four church amalgamation to being one church and doing renovations during Covid.

Vegreville is struggling to maintain its finances to keep the doors open. We have very committed people in our church working to make sure our doors do not close.

We as ministers are finding the switch from presbyteries to none very hard.

We do like the gatherings on Tuesdays at 1 pm.

There was some dismay that this meeting was not in person and that it has come after the Churches General Meeting.

Pamela: I also found that the process from moving me from full time to 3/4 time took about two months. And the ministry personnel was not even consulted during this process. It seems that as regional congregations we have to manage our issues by ourselves, but big decisions are in the hands of a few. There are processes to follow, but congregations don't know what they are and how to do them. I did attend one meeting about the call process.

A bright spot was the person who moved from one congregation to another to align better with their values even though that meant leaving behind a church family.

livestreaming, creative ministers, people who knew technology became very important, didn't attract young people, made adjustments, one church didn't meet for two years so set up a phone team, call once every two weeks but coming back has been challenging, one tech team was all under 18, we adapted, not everyone is physically able to come, no livestreaming but putting up recording afterwards, one congregation was undergoing renovations when Covid hit and met in the park then eventually in the gym, people prefer to be at home, predicting a winter shift back on line, user group loss meant fundraising stopped so amazing numbers went on PAR, helping the bottom line, offering stayed about the same for one church who had some money put aside, a few never came to church joined by facebook live for the first time so we will continue that, board restructured to a leadership team and interest groups which meant less people going to meetings, need to rethink what we were able to do with less people attending, focussing on elder and senior ministry, many people wearing many hats - how do we do spaghetti suppers without burning people out?

### **Question 2: How has your spirit and your community of faith's spirit held?**

My faith has gotten stronger. Needed to learn and if I could it then we would survive.

Many who knew, were willing to share their knowledge.

Another has felt their faith is floundering because of multiple personal challenges

The church is struggling financially

Knows there are folks she can turn to be held up when she needs to

Notices within the congregation wondering if they will ever recover. Knowing they will not go back in time – this is ok

The COF's spirit is stronger – even though there are fewer people to do the jobs

Congregations are starting to look at their buildings – they were there before but the pandemic has pushed it a bit more

The recognition of the loss of people due to death during the years of covid is more noticeable now that gathering in person and the impact of the loss of those members is just beginning to be felt, especially when a small congregation to begin with.

Missed going in person and singing. Started to come back and then went online again. Ladies group. Christmas crafts working over Zoom. Sunday school started again. It was difficult as not all churches were doing the same thing. Asking people to be as much a part of the service as possible. Covid restrictions were frustrating as they did not take into consideration the numbers attending the service. The church was the only social contact that some people had. Tried to keep in touch through calls. Services were e-mailed but live-streaming was not a possibility. Are we offering people rides to church. Loss of having funerals. Loss of Sunday school. Finances are a concern.

Dealing with a lot of change within congregation, denomination and society

Minister retired, interim minister, went to church more with Covid online than in person, congregation doing well. Bustling, friendly place. Covid brought congregation closer together, people made the extra effort.

Stresses and strains, minister left. problems in some churches. We've got a strong group of lay leaders who keep the church functional. Returning now to something more appropriate. More viable, taking steps towards union with 3 other churches.

a lot to adjust to. Learning curve was stressful, but a challenge to keep me engaged. As ministry personnel didn't take regular days off and vacations.

Covid itself theologically engaging, but very lonely for our family.

learned what loneliness was. Had been alone a lot, but never lonely. Dog saved me.

Crisis in terms of volunteers. many are older, and there are not others coming up to take on leadership positions, and volunteer positions.

Positive atmosphere when we go to church. People are positive and have enthusiasm. It is a concern to look five or ten years down the road. Many are concerned that they do not have children and young people in the worship.

It seems to be easy to connect from home (online). Is there something for us to learn from this. Other technology helps to keep connected, texting for example.

C of F has died a bit, because children are no longer attending. Families with young children have drifted away. Aging is a factor. The previous energy level is not available to tap into. Covid can result in the congregation stepping back and demoralization, but that is not a given. Congregations can also remain vital during difficult times and this energy can be maintained. Faith can go through periods of getting

stronger and then wavering; it is not necessarily a steady state. The challenges have prompted congregants to be a bit more open to trying new solutions.

did a train trip and a cosmos sunday about planets; got families interested; volunteers are harder to come by; don't want to commit and got used to being at home. focusing on prayer became difficult; start with praise what can you thank god for - easier than what should i pray about;

We have a group of folk wanting to move forward and some who want to return to the 'old' ways.

Recognition that some people simply can't attend because of health restrictions. How do we accommodate those folk -- that would be new. These are the folk who are enjoying the new online options.

Since last October, there are some conversations happening around shared Ecumenical shared ministry. This new conversation is a new way of thinking. This has put a different 'edge' to our people, and could bring a different dynamic to worship. The UCW closed because of tiredness -- even though they continue to do the activities.

Strength in the provision of outreach that continued (pick up or delivered) the business part isn't important.

Strength... numbers, outreach, openness, appreciative of new ministry team

Numbers increasing in some areas -- no known reason.

It has strengthened in working together to communicate with those who members felt were feeling isolated

people still miss presbytery in relationship building

The COVID pandemic made us reassess our mission statement, which strengthened us and made us more focused

Many spirits have held, many have wavered. In the middle of covid, one community found hope somewhat yet an enormous amount of grief. Thrilled to bump elbows, less hugging, relief to be back together which has revitalized people, yet quiet grieving, new groups forming, paying for children's leadership and a minister instead of two ministers. Hard to lose a minister in this time. New ministers were not able to get to know their congregation. It was like tag-team wrestling - when one was down, the next helped lift up, lots of grief work.

**Question 3: How did your community of faith stay connected within itself, and with other communities of faith?**

Shared worship leading. Church ended up losing some connections due to boundary changes. We need to meet with each other face-to-face. Ecumenical choir. We would miss important announcements particularly a death of one of the members. The importance of the office person to share communications.

slowly moving towards a shared ministry with ELCIC

Learned a lot about video cameras, had service available every week. Why did it take covid for us to figure out that we could provide services every week for extended care, people who can't get out.

Committed to keeping video there so folks can get access.

Can remain connected even when we travel

Use of technology was a source of division - especially for seniors.

Phone trees, calling every other week. Coffee on the deck. More connected during Covid than before.

New structure made staying connected with other communities of faith more difficult. Covid made that worse. No built in opportunities like presbytery meetings. Maybe some day we will have a cluster.

Ministerial in the community has been good for helping in the community, and keeping connections in the community.

There is connection with other United Churches by virtue of committees that people are on, but not sure if there is other connection.

In a multi-point pastoral charge there is connection with the other congregations for those who are in leadership positions.

Three needs to be an intentional task of reaching out to others.

There have been experiments with technology. YouTube is reaching out in one direction. Zoom can reach out in two directions. Zoom allows people online to talk with one another before or after worship.

there is always the possibility of the technology going wrong. We miss the music when we are online.

were't highly connected before to neighbors

started doing zoom coffee times

phone blitzes early in the shut downs

had some activities outside, even did that after they could be inside because someone created such a nice environment

In the previous Presbytery structure attendance at meetings was absolutely expected. Within the regional structure, the expectation for attendance seems to be much looser. There is less connection with other ministers and the cluster system does not seem to provide an effective answer.

increased FB and quarterly information pamphlets. emailed to those that have visited occasionally; continues to be about the same as we regather; young families and children was the cohort we lost; door drops of sermons or cards; ministers have gathered weekly and feel closer than in the past; but lay and retired ministers may be missing those connections. funerals online are helpful so they can still be a part of the service because it was a way for family far and wide to participate. may be in wrong sections but tried my best

Best way was a monthly newsletter. At first anticipated to be one letter size piece of paper, it has been six-eight pages long and an amazing connection 2/3 send by email, 1/3 sent by mail. Also Pastoral Care

teams called over 100 people on a weekly, then monthly just to touch base and let them know we hadn't forgotten about them.

How do we welcome new people now? It is easier if you were already connected before COVID.

Through shared Zoom

Through the local Ministerial Association

Through community meals

Improved our technology

Earl's Tuesday morning get together for ministry persons

Phone outs in the congregation, zoom meetings for book clubs, a little bit of reaching out, bible study and coffee hours via zoom, not much connection between churches except maybe facebook, word of mouth, weekly minister's meetings are very helpful for congregations with ministers.

## **Saturday morning**

### **Question 1: Our thoughts on implications of General Council 44 decisions for communities of faith and the Region. Concerns? Affirmations? What support for you need to help your CoF adapt to these decisions?**

Decisions are already in process. It is a process and we are in the middle of it. We need to help people be comfortable with the decision.

Tri yearly meeting is good, to allow time to get into the role of Moderator - virtual meetings can be more effective now as we get into - sometimes more participation to drive to or the cost of a room can be hindrance - online means that more people could participate even though not a formal rep.

Internet access is not equal across the country - so access is then limited to those that have ability to

Self insurance - encourage this as a monetary incentive - in Sask they did some insurance situation to help minister's if they were sick and needed coverage. In favor and support going forward.

Indigenous church changes - treat them as equals - and trust that their decisions will be good for ministry to continue.

Request of the indigenous church are asking for structural changes without the general council approval. Concerns over trusting that process. Like signing a "blank cheque".

Liked the terms "settler church" and "indigenous church". It is a risk, but it's a good opportunity to trust.

How do those changes affect funding? Could their choices "sink our ship"? What kind of "alarm bells" could help us avoid a catastrophic event?

Other CoFs have checks and balances, should not the indigenous churches have some checks and balances.

Insurance plan sounds like a good plan. If we could save 10-15% would be wonderful.

What are the risks of being self assured? What staffing is required? How does the diversity of property affect the risk and cost?

Boards will need to meet in order to discuss this and what they might need. It is fair.

Quorum: needing ministers in meeting is important. Feel that this is a good return. Makes Ministers and congregations accountable to each other.

Recognize that there may be an implication 25% increase for some people. Could a travel pool at the Region be considered? Would people buy into that? What about air travel? Again, costs become part of the decision making. Presbytery and Conferences used to cover costs.

The trauma of dealing with COVID, economics, etc., are being felt in small congregations and communities. "We need to begin at home first". Folk are finding that they need to support locally and don't have the capacity to do everything so they are withdrawing from some international support. When the question was asked about what impacts would be for Northern Spirit RC, International pieces didn't seem to fit.

Target reductions... does GC actually have the authority to dictate the targets for all CoF?

some places don't have the resources to do that? If it's named as a target can it be enforced?

If CoF are still in survival mode, they don't have the investment funds to move toward the target. If your CoF has people who are both sides of the Climate Change -- how do you balance that.? This can be another risky conversation. It's part of our vision as a church as being Daring Justice.

Remit 3 congregational/council vote about indigenous church. - need good materials both about remits and this one specifically. How can we address a lack of trust by settlers in the indigenous church?

Conflicts can exist between traditional spirituality and particularly colonialist religion. Comparison between African and North American experiences of colonialism.

How does this interplay with being an intercultural church?

We continue to experience discomfort with land acknowledgements.

Apology includes making things right, and making these changes are a part of making things right.

Insurance will likely help many churches.

Shifting insurance seems to be sensible and helpful - anything we can save in insurance would be a blessing.

Need to have faith the Indigenous Church will create their place. Streamlining remits is helpful, to allow Indigenous Church to do the work they are undertaking. We look forward to opportunities for learning and continued building of right relationship.

Actions around cost of living are needed - should be more than just what government ask - there was a promise that cost of living would be examined regularly under new system, but not aware that has happened. Likewise for mileage/fuel allowance.

Need discussion about equity and justice for struggling congregations, and for ministry personnel. How do we have those conversations in a healthy way.

Region and GC need to find ways to support congregations to thrive in ways other than just shutting the doors. There is good research in our own context and others, how can we bring it into discussion and action. And what is the definition of support and of thriving?

We have to relay this to our finance committee to help with decisions. How do we reduce our carbon emissions? We don't own church vehicles. Oil and gas based towns makes it hard to talk about this in our congregations. Mileage and cost of living piece is happening to everyone so it probably won't have too much of an impact. Glad to hear about the insurance situation, drop will be welcome. One concern about it was that we might miss our local broker and their short response time whenever we have had a problem or needed to make a claim - if it's centralized or like ADP, it will be slow and challenging. Step one is clear communication from General Council and sharing the Moderator's video is important. Need to highlight the benefits of insurance, it's mandatory now, but it has helped churches recover from fires and theft. Sometimes insurance also helps with tough decisions like not opening too soon just because someone wanted it - insurance said no so we stayed closed until a much more sensible time. Indigenous ministries gets forgotten in the midst of costs, etc. It is important but needs to be connected to us too. Becoming affirming will help us stay connected to what the indigenous ministry developments are.

the effect of technology - new structure - covid: three factors that have effected the health of communities of faith; calls us to look how we are the Church

positive effect of technology is allowing those who do not have ability to travel are now able to attend worship; and people unknown to the community of faith found their way to worship, often coming anonymously/quietly for a while until they felt comfortable.

disadvantage of not being able to read body language

hybrid service is a burden on volunteer energy; starting to see waning energy

communities of faith that do not have ministry leadership can access worship from other communities of faith; a larger issue for rural communities; an opportunity for communities of faith to care for each other.

Our churches are struggling financially and are concerned about mileage and increases

the idea of a church run insurance plan is good

We need to involve the Indigenous elders if we are to effectively go about reconciliation

Group 17 first discussed insurance. Mentions were that insurance increased 25% this year and 15% previous year. Another reiterated this as theirs went from \$8,000/yr to \$12,000/yr. One member had a recent fire claim that was settled very satisfactorily. The consensus was that the UCC comprehensive package through HUB was exceptional and would likely be difficult to duplicate at a lower cost. Members questioned whether coverage to the full extent would indeed be true under the new plan; expressed doubt that new plan would have the same quality of coverage.

Regarding mileage and COL increases, discussion showed a severe difference between urban vs rural congregations and the pressures this placed upon them. The urban COF had two rental streams of

income, a minister who was very conservative in mileage claims and less need to travel far. This congregation was able to pay their minister substantially more than the minimum level of pay. "How can you attract and maintain the kind of ministerial health if we don't pay for it?" Another mentioned that they needed to remind their board that other staff such as administrative and project staff are also deserving of a 3.4% increase. All agreed that in order to hire and keep good staff, they need to be competitively compensated. Mileage needs to keep pace with expenses. Otherwise, "How can you make connection with your members if you're concerned about whether or not you can afford to visit them?"

Regarding Indigenous Church remit, members said that they were "interested and curious". They felt that they did not know enough about it to express an opinion. All were appreciative of the Northern Spirit Region's gifts of Ashmont and Beverly to Indigenous groups. "Having autonomy comes with our rights and responsibilities. We have a responsibility to be informed and to inform. Trust that Indigenous Ministries will live into their ministry rather than something 'other than'."

Increase of travel km reimbursement – Paul's division of time shared between two pastoral charges - 60% one pastoral charge and 40% pastoral charge. His pastoral charges had already increased his mileage reimbursement when gas prices increased as he does a lot of driving for offering worship leadership to .50 cents per km before the announcement of GC 44. He feels that they will increase it to .55 cents per km without hesitation.

Carbon emission grant –celebrated that Riverbend took advantage of the Big Church grant of \$20000 and the community of faith to secure solar panels for the church. They raised \$40000 within ten days which was a total shock to the committee as they needed 60 panels at \$1000. Congregants came forward to actually sign the panel that they had sponsored.

The contract was awarded to a Indigenous group Newo Global Energy which is a non-profit social enterprise focused on education and cultural change. The project was completed one month ahead of forecasted completion date.

The community of faith is already seeing reduction in their energy bills.

Discussed the reality of people slowly drifting back into attendance after Covid and the need of continuing with Zoom to allow seniors that are immune compromised to attend worship. Very few young people and no children for Sunday school.

Both Paul and I are in similar situations with lower attendance and offerings.

Indigenous church – there is support for the UCCan to travel beside as two spirits and to not insist on our settler mentality of obeying the Basis of Union. We have all experienced within our communities of faith a deep seeded systemic racism that rises up when prayers, Land Acknowledgements, and learnings are shared within worship.

Far-reaching nature of the proposals (explicitly theological to wholly practical / financial) was very interesting

The limitations of an online meeting that takes place over an extended period of time were evident to someone who was not a commissioner but was observing the decision-making proceedings

The informal conversation that happens at a table group was sorely missed

Curiosity about what may come from the Indigenous church with regard to church structure

Opportunity to live into reconciliation for individual churches as we hold a remit about a process that the Indigenous church will engage in rather than waiting to hold a remit on a defined outcome

On the one hand, this gives every congregation a chance to have "skin in the game" and on the other hand, it's an opportunity to graciously pull back from being directive

There's an assumption made on the climate change goal that congregations will already be engaged in this process and will want to engage in this process

The Faithful Footprints program could help congregations toward a climate change goal

Curious about what the expectations are with regard to lowering carbon emissions; does this include people coming and going to church and the minister's mileage?

Urban and rural experience of reducing carbon emissions are quite different in that the cost to doing so is quite different

A ministerial cap and trade system might help build relationships between urban and rural communities (i.e., urban churches have a greater opportunity to reduce travel emissions so perhaps we could move into small groups of rural and urban churches and then reduce emissions in those small groups)

Very conservative approach to controversial issues at GC44 (i.e. Israel/Palestine; Essential Agreement) by the facilitation team who made a conscious choice to look for the issues where there was widespread agreement in the court and refer the more controversial issues to GCE

Principle-based approach to seeking justice was emphasized at the meeting, which allows for more responsiveness between General Councils

What are "industry standards" with regard to insurance policy? Do these line up with our values?

Re: Ministers at congregational meetings: is it possible to attend via technology (phone, Zoom, etc.) in those circumstances when doing so would seem advantageous (e.g. a pastoral charge supervisor)

The breakout room was a wonderful opportunity to get together to meet, introduce ourselves and learn about each other along with our concerns. Very moving and helpful.

Insurance: This support is great for C of F that have buildings

What happens when the number of church buildings decreases below what makes the program sustainable?

Would like to see support for clergy salaries to assist C of Fs.

Mileage

The issue of clergy who live a long way from their pastoral charge is not addressed. This will become more and more an issue as clergy serve several PC s.

The travel allowance needs to make ministry to CoFs at a distance from the minister's home more attractive.

An example was shared where the clergy person is paid an allowance and then pays taxes on the portion not claimabl .

Meeting electronically: Our young delegate only agreed to serve because she can connect to meetings via Zoom

Is there a way to make hybrid meetings more user friendly. Can we find ways of allowing those attending worship on line able to communicate with those present in the sanctuary.

What are we going to do with the money we save/have saved – perhaps develop a pool for the development of clusters.

Zoom is great for small meetings and meetings or conferences with international participants.

**Question 2: Is a healthier planet worth it given the drawbacks and missed connections that are an outcome of a virtual meeting. Is the Church less healthy because of a meeting like this, and if so is a less healthy Church worth the cost of a more healthy planet. And the "make lemonade" question is: is the Church really less healthy? Was the Church made less healthy or more healthy by the development of the printing press?**

Zoom is less engaging, there is a financial advantage. Zoom opens up new possibilities for those who find it difficult to travel. Zoom also opens up General Council Meetings to observers. Zoom requires good internet connections, a powerful enough computer and computer skills. Does this present a barrier for some? Do we need face to face regional gatherings when we can get together with closer neighbours to connect with others. There is a significant environmental advantage. Face to face may be more appealing and/or needed for extroverts. When we have had to face opportunities, we make linkages that then carry over to Zoom meetings. Feeling those links with others is weaker when we have not previously met face to face. Certainly, the environmental advantage is to be considered. Limitations of Zoom worth the environmental advantage . . . 3 thumbs down - 2 thumbs up

The youth are vital and need more fellowship or in person gatherings

Environmentally friendly communities - where can the individual churches make changes? can they afford to make changes? Whether the payout is worth the cost of solar panels etc. Insulation upgrades affordable? heating a building seven days a week with a new nursery renting space it helps feel like it is reducing the footprint in the wider community.

Lay worship leaders have helped do pulpit supply so saving the planet by not needing to have people come from afar.

holy manners - stay off cell phone when in a meeting. Keep focus in the room is harder...should be in upper section??

General Council on ZOOM - is likely the future to help budgets and the planet.

The virtual meetings are great and add to the ability to meet, but they can't completely replace face to face. Best to look at a combination. Zoom also gives people back some of their time (reduced driving time). Driving, time, road conditions, and outside of work hours (not having to take vacation time to attend).

New appreciation of virtual church service. Adding more "senses" to the experience.

Appreciation for ministry personnel being "tech savvy".

Appreciate being able to attend on a "Wednesday".

Don't want to see it replace in person.

Work for more people.

Does limit people with no computer or limited internet service.

Singing is important. Nice to do it with others.

1. Being in person helps to build those connections. We tend to have a tendency of not wanting to change but we are in a time of climate change. Both have pros and cons. 2. Is the church less healthy because we are meeting like this...Doesn't necessarily affect the church, change takes time, but most adapt. Churches are evolving. Zoom makes us much more vulnerable - we cannot "hide". We are finding that for whatever reason people are not asking those clarifying questions. 3. "Lemonade Question" looking at the package - do we need to print them or look at them online??? Going to the packages we had some reports but not others. Is that because we are short staffed? It is confusing to be at a meeting where it is a gathering and not a meeting and we are not voting???

Is NSRC not meeting in person until 2025?? Not Clear

Commissioner experience. Online is great for planet care. Recognize the loss of people connections in that. Feeling that the spirit moves better in person -- those conversations are invaluable. Very hard to make the choice.

Need to find a balance between online and in-person. The technology we have learned over the last two years has allowed some flexibility and cost effectiveness. We have become more comfortable with ZOOM that we didn't have before.

When we know each other well, we can do business more easily.

Relationships are essential. In the most trying of circumstances, it is those conversations face-to-face that help achieve consensus, open minds. When we don't know each other being together is essential, topics around Identity and Change need face-to-face.

Meetings include business as well as social.

We need to be more aware of not revisiting decisions and be more effective or leave space for social connections.

Council was never the same from one session to the next with the stretched out format. A different dynamic. Different types of conversations can happen online and in person. How do we have visioning/missional when we aren't in the same room.

Challenges of taking time off work for a week plus to go to general council. more democratic, allowing wider range of participation.

Saving a lot of money for the church, for the participants. We can see each other in this way. We have managed to make it work. Can engage with church and the world from anywhere. once in a while it is good to meet in person. Small number of people in a congregational meeting isn't so bad. Covid has opened our minds to different uses of technology.

It's easier for people to check us out online.

relearn how to do things differently when we are online. we forget that online is different from in person gathering.

Re: targets for congregations: Questions about what action congregations would take.

Mention of various programs and grants (eg Faithful Footsteps)

Is this another ask from GC that doesn't take account the situation of local communities of faith. Capacity issues have to be part of the equation, even though we support the intent.

re virtual meetings - church more healthy in caring for planet, creation.

Responses to climate change not what makes us unhealthy, but may be adding to it.

Shift to online meetings makes meetings more accessible, but much healthy relationship building doesn't happen in virtual meetings.

Need constant discernment about what we should do - not either virtual or only in person.

At congregation level, we know different comfort levels exist, but need to recognize we won't be done with COVID or something like it, so we will have to discern - maybe around intent for meeting.

Need to look at different ways of hybrid - eg connected regional gatherings for General Council meeting. Find effective ways to use the tech we have, knowing it will take time and effort.

We have a plan for every third year in person, which will be cost and time effective, and stewards for a good planet. It will help us minimise our carbon footprint. In some ways we miss the watercooler chat, but not having to travel and find lodgings for the night means a lot less time and energy from the clergy. In other ways, sometimes the watercooler chat was negative or complaining and we don't miss that. Less physical meeting may be more healthy. Small churches in Covid times didn't see much difference, but easier now we can have coffee time without masks. Also a benefit for folks who have hearing issues, one congregation's board still meets virtually because one member is quite deaf and this means we don't have to repeat everything twice.

distances used to determine how and where we meet; technology provides opportunity to meet more often and increase connection;

loss of Presbytery has been a factor in how we do our work

invitation to create clusters, but who has time, energy to make that happen

there needs to be guidance on how to initiate and maintain clusters; other Regional Council experience

do we need a task group or something to provide leadership in how to create clusters and networks

tired from covid and the isolation is brought. Church life is intense as we come out of pandemic;  
need to reconsider criteria for qualifying for financial support; currently support is out of reach until  
need is quite desperate.

church's influence has waned and much of the progress the Church supported in the past is being  
clawed back; our capacity to do these things is diminished; running out of steam

not only our financial resources are diminishing, but our energy resources are diminishing as well

People now know they can meet online if the weather is lousy; do church "business" in different ways

Now people are needing to learn how to do "hybrid"

technology allows people who are scattered to meet and work together

when people get upset that things are not working perfectly, they need encouragement to breathe!

we still have adjusting to do; need kindness, patience

Change is still a challenging necessary reality; some adapt easily and for others it is hard

how could we make it easier for communities of faith to access grants/funding? what could we hope or  
dream for some of the money that was not used during the pandemic; could we provide a basic tech  
package for every community of faith

Anxiety about finances is a real factor; cannot brush it away.

Those communities of faith that are somewhat stable could be encouraged or invited to participate in  
providing resources to communities of faith that do not have resources

Provide information on how initiatives do reduce carbon footprint

a technological resource person available to communities of faith would be a welcome and valued  
addition

practically, we try to take the bus or walk to reduce our carbon footprint

Zoom communication is not as effective as in person, it may save money but there is a communication  
price to pay for zooming

"It's possible to get together in person without damaging the planet."

"3-year cycle they're talking about is great."

Gathering online - "It's a disservice to the Church and more people are disconnected."

"I certainly hope the next gathering is in person."

"As much as people hated Presbytery, that is where we made connections that sustained us."

"Ministry personnel feel as though they are standing alone within the church, without higher church  
support." When asked what that meant, is it all due to the loss of Presbytery? They said, "Staffing is  
different. Hasn't been clergy retreats the day before to meet new people and make new connections.

How are we sustaining or creating healthy relationships? How are new ministers being connected to others?"

"What has been a help is the weekly zoom that clergy are invited to."

"Really miss in-person gatherings."

Recorded by Leanne Templeton. I'd like to mention that I have been surprised to hear in both of the two break out sessions we've had so far, that my positive experience, as staff, of being supported and connected to peers throughout the pandemic does NOT seem to be the feeling expressed by the ministers in the groups I've been in. Many have expressed disappointment with the region and the wider church; they feel isolated (beyond normal covid isolation), I think that one even used the word "abandoned" or left adrift.

## **Saturday groups 2**

### **Question 1, Saturday afternoon: How do we move forward?**

Challenges to moving forward

Getting people into positions for governing

Assessing the health and wellbeing of Pastoral Charges

Possibility of sharing ministry leadership resources with other Pastoral Charges-Edson and Hinton, not sure about Whitecourt

Most people travel to Edmonton for major shopping and services

Recreational draw to mountains

Edson is an established family/friend community: other communities can feel more transient

Community meals and Bargain Boutique are strong outreach

Depends on how relevant to their lives people feel the church is

Demographics change and there is not much the church can do about that

Messy church on a Friday night – turned out to be an interesting program for children where families could share meals together and build community

COVID may dictate how this will happen

How do we bridge the gap between vaccers and anti-vaccers?

Structure seems fine to me. How do we move forward and to what?? Failure in response was a problem in a couple of experiences...a process to create a stronger connection/ are we talking about the Cof F or Region or the church at large.

Rebuild connections where they are not working well; calling a minister - had support but timeliness was a little lacking...so it would have been nice to have a little more support.

we need more people

people are excited to be getting back together

maybe we need more partnerships

maybe need to hear from churches who have sold their buildings and how they have been able to redirect their resources

consider amalgamations

being willing to take risks - as mentioned by Desmond Cole

I have no idea. We need to identify who we are now? We need to ask our community where they want us to go. This is an opportunity for re-visioning at the congregational level -- what is our new focus, our new priorities. Attendance/Spirit/ Technology have changed us.

A shared visioning exercise could be an instigator for getting us to talk to each other.

Need a sense of openness from CoF to engage in newness.

looking at website - well set up, easy to find, get the staff we need. Perhaps we are understaffed to do the work we need to do?

Support to communities of faith committee is overwhelmed with requests for help. Every issue that you have, that is where you start. They are very busy. Earl is their staff support, but also supports many other committees.

Helping congregations who want to sell property, that committee helps to figure out if that is really what you need to do?

Amalgamating churches get oversight from that process

Changing structures, changing buildings all starts there.

How can we reimagine that work?

Concern about becoming congregational. Concern with how we deal with buildings.

Concern for committees feeling overworked, or not having the resources (staff and skills) to reach their goals.

Can we reach out to other regions to see how they do things.

Amalgamation sometimes but not for everyone; as we go forward do not go back; encourage and enable online access but not at the expense of giving up together times - moving forward includes both.

"Together We Worship" a good resource for some congregations. Curiosity, wonder, openness, exploring values under the things that we consider important (inspired by participation in Curiosity Cohort thru EDGE and LeaderShift).

By remembering why we do what we do. Remembering that we focus on the justice issues of our time because that's our purpose for doing the work of Christ. By learning how to ask questions around our faith, around our purpose, around our impact, ask ourselves why our particular community needs a

united church. We are a training ground for decent people who learn how to be generous and compassionate, caring and thoughtful. We are called to be a healthy Christian community in service of Jesus' mission and ministry.

Where have we been and where do we want to go? Need to think about intention and identity as an early step. Faith Lift was identified as a priority as our face to face meeting, but work has lapsed. What will this look like? University students will be important. We likely will not attract people to sitting in a church on a Sunday morning.

Group comprised of St. Albert, Highlands United, St. Paul's United, Yellowknife, and Stony Plain representatives.

How do we move forward? What can we afford? What is our future?

HUB finally seems to be operating in a more helpful manner for us. There are many more resources available to us now. We need to use them.

Many of us feel "up in the air" right now. That being said we went on to share some ways we are currently exploring and visioning for the future.

Yellowknife is having serious discussion with the Lutheran church which now rents space in its building. Though finances have remained fairly steady over the pandemic numbers in both churches necessitate new actions.

Highlands is without a minister following a 33 year term. They still own a manse which is rented out for \$1800 per month. Despite the upkeep costs this rental revenue remains more valuable to retain than to sell. A playschool rents the downstairs area. An interim ministry is working while they search.

St. Albert hired a consultant firm for their visioning exercise. This involved 6 surveys which included not only the C of F but also its neighbours, community groups with whom it is partnered in some way, and other church and interfaith groups in their area. This was followed by 3 sessions of reporting without strategy. Finally a meeting to consider strategy.

Stony Plain is without a minister. They are finding the new search process much slower than the former JNAC process. Finances have remained fairly steady. Two other churches rent space from us along with some community groups. One retired minister and three trained members of the C of F currently fill our pulpit. Consideration is being

given to sharing ministry with another C of F.

Interim ministry may help some situations though intentional interim ministers are scarce. This can be an energizing and positive experience if the option is there.

Team visitations of the Community of Faith can be helpful in determining our future.

Conclusions: We felt we are all "in the same boat" in many ways. No quick answers.

Take small steps one at a time working toward a goal.

We need a willingness to try new ideas/approaches.

All are looking forward to the meeting in person in 2023.

*These responses are not divided among the three questions. We just had a pretty deep and ongoing check-in. So here is something like an overview of that time.*

1) Hard to move forward when thinking about the past. Shared ministry is a possible path for moving forward. Covid has been a challenge - bouncing back and forth between in person and virtual meetings and putting planned visioning sessions on hold. Dealing with a community building - that has been in high demand except in pandemic times. Future is a question mark - for ongoing support of pastoral relationship.

2) Imminent retirement. Deferred so that two retirements weren't going to happen in the same area at the same time. Amalgamation with a neighbouring community of faith. That neighbour has been served with a minister from another denomination. Two communities of faith in limbo because of retirements and lack of clarity around amalgamation. Mission work and church building overseas! Along with financial worries about all of that. Worries about the continuity of the faith community from younger generations.

3) Revisioning - not spending any money! We could raise more money for staffing by taxing. Experience is congregationalist. Not too worried about what the regional council could be doing or helping with. Intentional (non-cluster) informal connection with neighbouring colleagues. Not personally dissatisfied with the current state. So what needs to be re-visioned.

4) The gift of a new medium - but did we use it? The gift of being outside the church for a while and offering a perspective from there. The excitement of being part of a worshiping community again.

---- Uncertain what this was specifically asking for - forward from the pandemic? from the transition? People in our group had limited experience at gatherings. For two people, this was the first gathering that they had attended. They asked "When NS came together, did it not have a mandate and priority set?" Discussion followed about how the work of the church gets done. Is it local-focused, on our own COF, or is there a sense of identity as a region? "How we move forward depends upon the fall (flu season) and whether we can meet in person safely or not."

"Prior to the region forming, there was a cluster that was just beginning to form its own identity, but then that ended." When asked if anyone has ever mentioned that it should or could be restarted, they said that they hadn't heard any talk about it.

## Question 2, Saturday afternoon: What does re-visioning look like?

Back to giving in person

we are tired from COVID-so where is the energy for revisioning?

more deep listening is needed to hear what the community needs and feels is important

how do we bridge the generation gap?

Fewer resources - rethinking sharing, rethinking priorities, restructuring leadership to still meet the needs. Spirit of Hope example of re-imagining. Re-visioning needs all stake-holders connected....requires connections to all parties - donors, leaders, partners, community, all stake holders up to national church to regional...multi prong visioning.

Weird innovation arm that has grown - EDGE and grants etc. Larger church has boxes around how / what that innovation can look like.

How to make CoF thrive. motions at GC44 were focused on some of the barriers to innovation.

Communication is key to keep people in the loop and informed....repeat the message so that when it is read at some point.

congregations may be struggling for their own volunteers, hard to encourage people to serve on regional committees

time involved to travel may discourage volunteering on committees

being proactive rather than waiting to long and not having choices

Will CoF have the energy to engage in a Regional Visioning. How does Ecumenical/Shared ministry fit? Where does Chaplaincy fit? How could a structure be built to accommodate this. Could we engage congregations in a visioning and therefore give them the tools to take back home? Could the Region create a skeleton to follow for a visioning process/exercise to guide pastoral charges?

Could a person be available to tour struggling churches? It may be easier to get responses with a face-to-face connection.

What about webinar engagement? including options.

Could Ministry Personnel be asked to do a visioning exercise on a Sunday morning instead of/in conjunction with worship... so that we get fuller engagement from more churches and responses in a timely manner. What about those who don't have ministry personnel? Or could they identify someone within their group who has the skills to do this?

There are various different levels of energy for this work.

What about a two-step process -- individual congregations first then meet as a cluster to think about it. A network of presenters/Train the trainer.

We're still trying to figure out how to operate within the structure that we have. Maybe we don't need a new vision right now.

The Northern Spirit Executive commission set up these areas. Parameters of current committees came from them.

How do we find people? Do we need to get lay people to step up? are order of ministry people doing their 10% part? Can work of the wider church be done by other volunteers who are not also congregational reps?

What is the role of the congregational rep?

If we can't find the volunteers, we need to let it go, or we need to pay someone.

Would congregations rather be asked for more volunteers or more money?

Has 2 Alberta regions worked for us?

where does our leadership come from. We are neither congregational nor episcopal in structure. Where do we find leaders for the re-visioning?

Do we need someone to be a vision keeper. Remembering that in the Indigenous church there were vision keepers. Can we learn from this experience. Now is the time to listen to that wisdom.

Observation that in the indigenous church they place a low priority on administration. Is this something from which we can learn?

Examining and exploring values eg: relationships, being a relational community, love, love your neighbours. Rebuilding and renewing relationships that may have gone to the wayside through COVID - which are continuing and which were good for a time but no longer. Going deeper into what do we value and what do we do to embody that. Maybe even looking at other faiths that think the same as us? Attending other Christian faith communities to see where there is some alignment? (eg: ELCIC congregations) Maybe goes without saying, but a prayerful process - not solely a matter of survival, but where and how is God calling us in this time and place? One comment: Address concerns about being fractious - calling ourselves an "Affirming Church," an "anti-racist church," a "justice church" - why can't we just be one church that loves all? Another comment: using these titles makes how we love everyone more intentional. As we re-vision, perhaps keeping in mind how we draw the broader UCC into those visions because some feel disconnected to some of the work that is going on - how do we put into action these things we are saying about the different types of church we are and how all those different labels support our values of love and inclusion?

"We need new people to help us sing the old hymns" does not work, it is only a longing for the 'good old days' and an entrenchment in not changing. We need open handed, open hearted, open minded ideas on how to complete our mission and ministry - what we are really passionate about. We could structure things in the way that fits the community we are in, and break away from our addictions to committee? We expect volunteers to jump in which is like expecting people who wander into an emergency room to suddenly start nursing everyone, taking temperatures, checking blood pressure, doing stitches before they've been diagnosed by doctors or nurses...

We need to recognize that young people are satisfied with virtual connections. Also, some folks, of a variety of ages, have an appetite for a quiet, accepting space in a church on Sunday morning. We likely need an integrated or hybrid approach. We need to get creative about what it means to be the church. Could the Region give a virtual service to congregations as a Christmas Sunday morning service.

Member shared that they are considering participating in an experimental circuit ministry.

"Identify God's will and go in that direction."

### **Question 3, Saturday afternoon: How does the theme "United in Change" reflect this?**

Change is inevitable-how do we stay nimble enough to respond to that change?

The words reflect what we've been saying. Actions backing up the strong engagement and communication then it will feel like we are united in change....at all three levels.

If the national church or the region make the changes and pass it down then it is not very united.

GLI - networks are more active but have been at it a long time.

Telling us what 's happening is not communication - but asking for input and feedback needs to be a conversation for true communication. Enabling moves not making more rules that are barriers to moving forward.

Flexibility in applying rules because of the great number of different church categories.

AGM motions to allow adherents to vote....membership rules - if you attend you belong, if you have to report and funding etc operates on membership. The rules will not serve us well in the future. ZOOM people may be in other provinces but count you as their home church and give to that online congregation. So are they members?

In small communities - they may worship from afar.

meeting in person provides more opportunity to share ideas and learn from each other, although there are of course costs to that

Need leadership and this needs encouragement to develop. The Theme has us looking out from our individual groups...who can we bring in, get help from? This process of connecting with each other is valuable. We could be united in the same processes, gathering the same information. Encouraging sharing information with other congregations.

Mandate publication... always had a section that shared a congregation's success stories to inspire other churches to try something new. Is there a way to continue sharing stories in the Newsletter again uniting us in experience. The stories we heard today and the depth they were willing to share at was very helpful. Sharing enthusiasm is catching!

yup meeting helpful to feel united, reconnect. Helpful to understand what it means to be a regional council.

"in" is an important word in the theme - rather than "for" change - because it invites us into solidarity and community and into process. It also acknowledges the world is changing around us, and relationship

is important as we acknowledge the change, how we respond to change, and the different places we are all at within these interconnected processes.

Didn't get to this question

Change is difficult. Sessions such as today help to make connections and foster a feeling that we have each other's backs. Who we identify with needs further consideration. When we have questions about laws/rules in Alberta, Living Skies is our go to partner. Having partners outside of Alberta is not useful. The current configuration with NSRC, Living Skies, Prairie to Pine creates a number of inefficiencies. This is a question about identity; who are we as we move forward.

"The weekly clergy meeting hosted by Earl has been very good just to talk about things that are affecting us and our congregations."

"During the pandemic there was a real coming together, sharing, caring for one another as if we were a family. Human spirit was evident."

"We are more united than we think."

"The church's new vision of deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice fills me with hope."

"Directing resources to identify and build capacity for leadership (ministry, lay, volunteer) is what I see having impact on the future."

