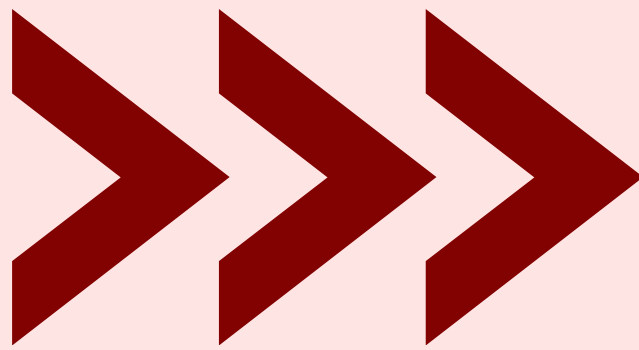


REPORTS OF THE REGION



2024

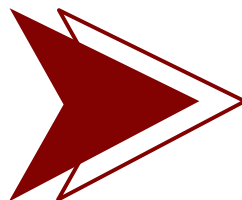
NORTHERN SPIRIT
REGIONAL COUNCIL
REPORTS

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Pastoral Relations Report

Adam Hall,

Pastoral Relations Minister

- Highlights:**
- Northern Spirit's Pastoral Charge Supervisors & Pastoral Relations Liaisons
 - Overview of Northern Spirit committees and their work
 - Graphs: visualizing Northern Spirit's vacancy rate and visioning work

- Key Links:**
- [More information about the Pastoral Relations Commission](#)
 - [More information about committees, vacancies, and how you can get involved.](#)
 - Contact Adam: adam.hall@united-church.ca



(Updated statistic information to May 2, 2024)

The Northern Spirit Regional Council follows the Pastoral Relations structure established in 2019, which includes the Pastoral Relations Commission and three Pastoral relations committees (Lay leadership support, Ministry Personnel Support, and Community of Faith support). Each of our committees reports to the commission for final approvals and policy direction. All pastoral relations policies are recommended to the Regional Council Executive for approval. The responsibilities of this structure are to ensure the establishment, support, and development of healthy pastoral relationships in our communities of faith, by supporting and working with our communities of faith, lay leaders, and ministry personnel. Additionally, our Pastoral Relations structure works closely with the Office of Vocation Minister, Laura Fohse and our Growth Animator Jordan Cantwell.

A great deal of our connection to communities of faith comes through the people of this region who serve as Pastoral Charge Supervisors and Pastoral Relations Liaisons.

Pastoral Charge Supervisors : support local governing bodies when they are without Called or appointed ministry personnel. Currently we have 32 Pastoral Charge Supervisors working with 39 Pastoral Charges.

Raleigh Kett, Wayne Youngward, Chang Lee, Stephen Sparks, Mowkadi Basele, Brenda Simon, Peter Chynoweth, Marilyn Carroll, Jim Lochhead, Chelsea Masterman, Linda McLaren, Bill Doyle, Shirly Preuss, Sharon McRann, Deanna Cox, Sandy Ferguson, Lynn Maki, Martha Dawson, Jo-Anne Kobylka, Helen Reed, Chris Donnelly, Paul Allard, Jackie St. Goddard, Deborah Hoekstra, Blaine Gregg, Barb Boschman, Caylee Bailey, Marlene Salmonson, Deborah Morris, Mervin Gallant, Stuart Jackson, Ruth Lumax.

Pastoral Relations Liaisons: Provide training and guidance to Communities of Faith as they create a Community of Faith Profile and undertake the search for new ministry personnel. We currently have 14 Pastoral Relations Liaisons active within our region.

Anna Constantin, Stephen Sparks, Roger Manuel, Anne Telford, Susan Silverthorne, Gaie Goin, Karen Bridges, Britt Aerhart, Mary Ann Pastuck, Sun-Do Hyun (Living Skies Region), Lloyd Henderson, Monica Rosborough, Leigh Sinclair, Candace McNeill.

Pastoral Relations Commission and Committees

Pastoral Relations Commission: Susan Silverthorne (Chair), Rob McPhee, Linda McLaren, Stephen Sparks. (Staff support: Adam Hall, Chloe Burns).

The Pastoral Relations Commission is a decision-making body which holds overall responsibility for Pastoral Relations. This includes, but is not limited to, the recruitment, training, and appointments of pastoral charge supervisors and pastoral relations liaisons, approval of requests for change of pastoral relationships (including retirements), approval of community of faith profiles, tracking sabbatical leaves occurring in the region, approving calls/appointment of ministry personnel to pastoral charges/communities of faith, creating and recommending pastoral relations policies to the Regional executive, and requesting reviews of communities of faith under the guidance of section J.4 of the Manual (2024).

Lay Leadership Support Committee: Gaie Goin (Chair), Trudy Tanner, Merlin Rosser, David Faber (Staff support - Adam Hall, Chloe Burns).

This committee supports lay leadership within the communities of faith in our region. This includes, but is not limited to, training and approving Sacrament Elders. Approving, supervising, and supporting Licensed Lay Worship Leaders. Creating and updating policy in connection to the work of the committee. Planning and leading in-person/online gatherings of lay leaders for further education and fellowship.

Ministry Personnel Support Committee: Dirk Jessen (Chair), Anne Telford, Debbie Brill (Staff Support: Laura Fohse, Adam Hall, Chloe Burns).

The Ministry Personnel Support Committee provides support, encouragement, and connection to ministry personnel, active and retired, who are members of our Regional Council. This support is offered through personal connections, in-person gatherings and workshops, and tri-monthly online clergy gatherings on Tuesdays.

Community of Faith Support Committee: Alistair Mackay, Steven Johann, Chang Lee, Lynn Maki (staff support Adam Hall and Chloe Burns).

The Communities of Faith Support Committee is responsible for providing guidance and support to communities of faith that are making decisions about their ministry and vision. It is through this committee that the Regional Council exercises oversight of communities of faith. This can include decisions about disbanding, amalgamating, engaging conversations around sharing of resources, buildings, and staff. They provide guidance and support to communities

of Faith in all stages of being. This community also reviews the Annual Reports of Communities of faith and seeks to support the communities with follow up. This committee also works with our neighbours to develop and support Ecumenical Shared Ministries.

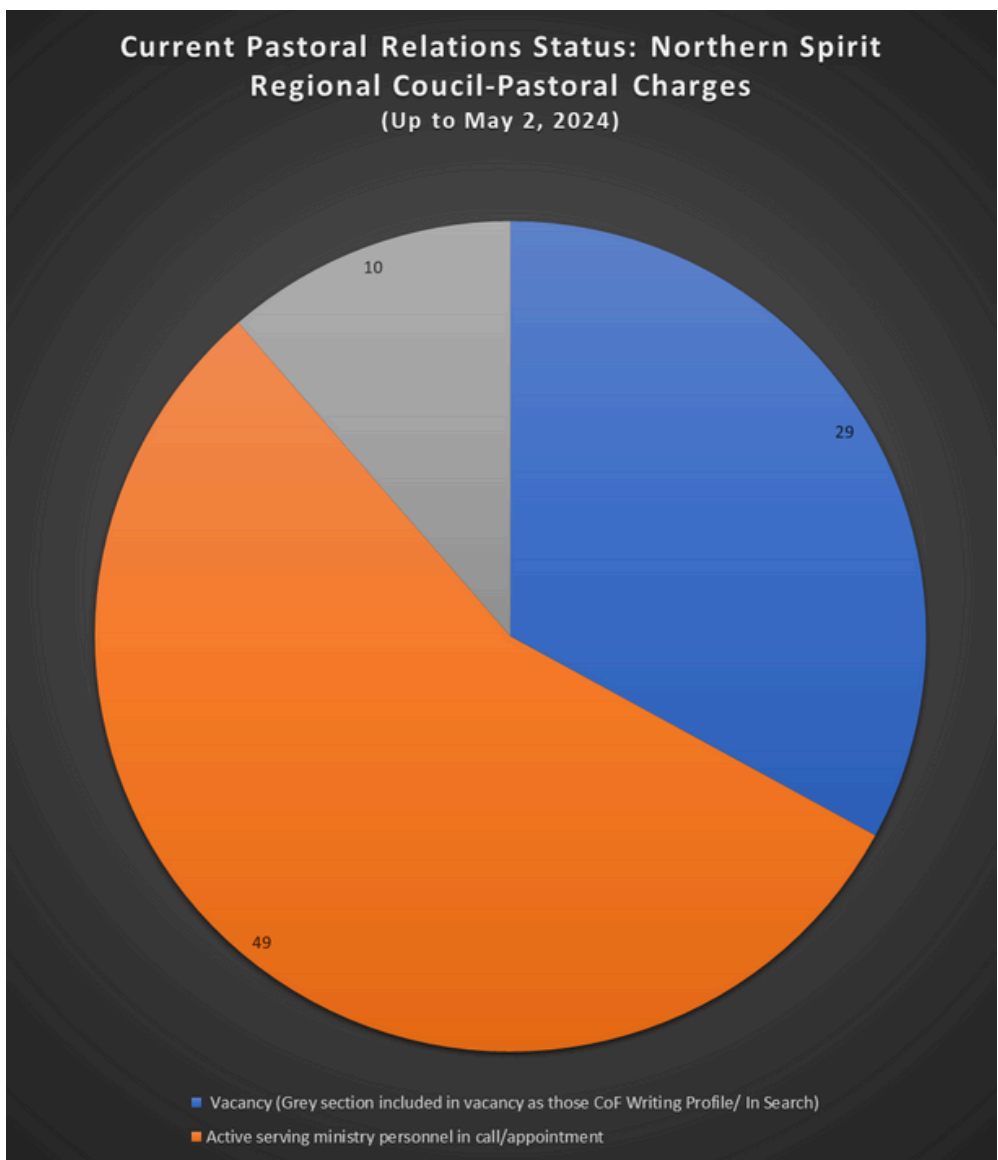
The work of the Commission, Committees, Supervisors, and Liaisons is supported through the Northern Spirit Regional Council Pastoral Relations Minister, Adam Hall, and the Northern Spirit Office Administrator, Chloe Burns.

Graphs:

The following two graphs articulate our current Pastoral Relations reality within the Northern Spirit Region and ongoing visioning and collaboration work.

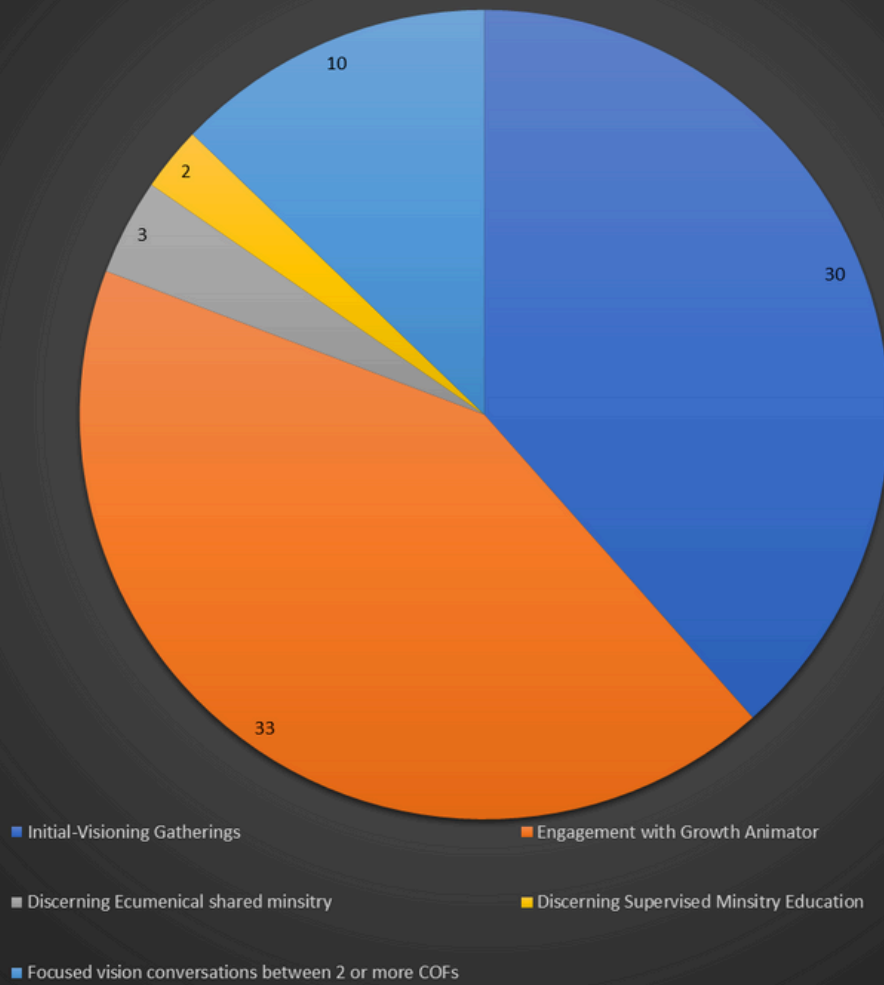
Graph 1- Highlights the vacancy rate (including those in process of profile writing and search in purple) in contrast to our pastoral charges currently served by active ministry personnel.

Graph 2- Highlights the on-going visioning work that is being done with the Region.



Graph 1- Highlights the vacancy rate (including those in process of profile writing and search in purple) in contrast to our pastoral charges currently served by active ministry personnel.

**Current status of Pastoral relations visioning:
Community of Faith engagement**
(Up to May 2, 2024)



Graph 2- Highlights the on-going visioning work that is being done with the Region.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Adam Hall,
Northern Spirit Regional Council Pastoral Relations Minister

Office of Vocation Report

Northern Spirit, Living Skies and Prairie to Pine Regional Councils



Rev. Laura Fohse, Vocational Minister

- Highlights:**
- Prairie Candidacy Board supporting 27 candidates; 9 in Northern Spirit!
 - Admissions process updates
 - Laura's highlights: connecting & interacting

- Key Links:**
- [More information about the structure of the Office of Vocation](#)
 - Contact Laura: lfohse@united-church.ca



Prairie Candidacy Board

The Prairie Candidacy Board has been hard at work supporting 27 individuals on their journey through the Candidacy Pathway. We have an amazing and diverse board consisting of: Chair Rob Smith; Vice-Chair Doreen Hewitson, Aurora Espenant, Chewe Mulenga, Mary Annan, Mokwadi Basele, Salesi Takau, Shirley Goodrich, SunDo Hyun, Wayne Youngward, Hugh MacGregor, Keith Hall, and Rick Burton.

Of the 27 engaged with the Candidacy Pathway: 5 are from Prairie to Pine, 8 from Living Skies, 9 from Northern Spirit and 5 are from other regions. We have 1 in the Designated Lay Ministry stream, 6 in the Diaconal stream, and 20 in the Ordained stream. We have 5 candidates in Supervised Ministry Education (SME). 4 candidates are completing the pathway in 2023, 3 will be ordained in Living Skies Regional and 1 will be ordained in Northern Spirit Regional Council.

The Prairie Candidacy Board has engaged in equity, diversity and anti-oppression training as mandated for all General Council committee members. They are committed to take into account a diversity of realities and experience among interviewees. These include cultural, language, physical, visual, auditory, and neurodivergent considerations. They will continue to learn, adapting and adjusting our practices in the process.

Admissions Committee

(below are excerpts from the Office of Vocation Accountability Report prepared by the Rev. Norm Seli, chair of the Board of Vocation, and the Rev. Marlene Britton, Director of Policy and Programs for Ministry Personnel)

The number of ministers in the Admission process reached 200 people in 2022. This led to a shortage of accompaniers meaning that ministers expressing interest in admission were told there were dozens of ministers ahead of them waiting to speak with someone about applying for the Admission process. For those who reached the entrance or final interview stage, there

was a queue of approximately three months before an interview slot was available. Most significantly, the Admission Board noted an alarming reality: when it came time to seek an admission appointment, the process was not functioning equitably for racialized ministers. Consequently, we entered 2023 with the Admission process paused. Throughout 2023, the focus of admission work has been on addressing these bottlenecks and inequities.

As of December, 2023 there were 126 ministers in the admissions process – 53 of which were seeking appointments. There were 15 ministers admitted in 2023.



Below is a list of other committees of the Office of Vocation and a brief description of what they do. Information taken from [Office of Vocation: Structure and Responsibilities May 2023](#):

Board of Vocation is the elected member body accountable for the work of the Office of Vocation to the General Council.

Standards for Accreditation Committee implements the policies set by the General Council by recommending standards to the Board of Vocation. These standards are to contribute to the effectiveness of ministry personnel in their leadership in communities of faith and beyond, responding to God’s call.

Credentialing Committee responds to applications from ministry personnel for intentional interim ministry, educational supervisors, readmission, ministry partners, military chaplains and other chaplains as required.

Response Committee is responsible for receiving and addressing concerns and determining the most appropriate process or committee to address eligible concerns.

Remedial Committee is responsible for ensuring compliance by ministry personnel; assessing and deciding whether to accept an investigator’s findings in relation to allegations of misconduct; assessing and deciding whether to accept a reviewer’s report findings with respect to the effectiveness of a ministry personnel; determining the appropriate disposition of substantiated concerns.



My Highlights

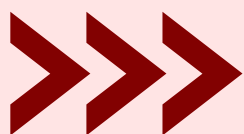
As Vocational Minister I am provided with many opportunities to connect with ministry personnel and candidates for ministry. These interactions are a highlight for me. Whether I’m sharing resources with someone seeking information on things like retirement and sabbatical or listening to someone share about struggles in their pastoral relationship, I feel immense gratitude for the commitment, compassion, and faithfulness of our ministers. Theirs is not an easy vocation and I appreciate any opportunity to support them along the way (even if its just to problem solve a ChurchHub fail).

I am responsible for facilitating many of the mandatory boundaries trainings. I'm aware this isn't everyone's favourite learning opportunity but I appreciate those who show up, engage, and share their experience, strength and wisdom with each other. We are working at updating the trainings to ensure they are relevant and interesting to the participants.

In 2023 I began offering monthly Zoom gatherings to ministry candidates. Some months we are joined by a guest with some expertise and other months we just show up and check in with each other. This is an opportunity for them to share their celebrations and frustrations on the Candidacy Pathway with each other and offer encouragement.

I most frequently encounter God through interactions. Connecting with others grounds me and reminds me by whom and to what I have been called.

*Submitted by Rev. Laura Fohse,
Vocational Minister*



Archives Report

Leanne Templeton, Archivist

Highlights:

- 37 boxes of records, or eleven linear metres, received in 2023!
- Fabulous archives volunteers
- Highlights of 2023: National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering, meeting with Administrators' Network, Association of Canadian Archivists Conference.

Key Links:

- [More information about Northern Spirit's Archives](#)
- Contact Leanne: templeton@united-church.ca

In 2023, the Archives received thirty-seven boxes of records from twenty-one individuals and communities of faith. This represents approximately eleven linear metres of records. As of March 2024, the total extent of the Chinook Winds and Northern Spirit regional archival holdings is estimated to be 770 linear metres.

The 770 metres of records are preserved in four vaults on the first floor of the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Through a partnership agreement with the Government of Alberta, the part-time United Church Archivist works with a team to ensure that regional records are clean, safe and accessible. The team includes reference archivists, conservators, IT, security, janitorial and maintenance personnel.

Two fabulous, dedicated, long-serving United Church volunteers also play integral roles in the regional archives. Phyllis Verhaar lends her skills to tackling unprocessed backlog by rehousing, identifying and organizing records. Gayle Simonson, an author and expert researcher, undertakes initial searches for many reference requests. Their knowledge, connections and background in church matters makes solving problems together in the archives a joyful adventure (see photo, left to right: Gayle Simonson, Phyllis Verhaar, Leanne Templeton).



Some highlights of the year included hosting a break-out session at the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering, contributing to the statistics provided to the Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, sharing records management and archival transfer information with the Northern Spirit Church Office Administrators cluster, gathering with regional council archivists in Sackville, NB, and attending the Association of Canadian Archivists Conference together.

Goals for the upcoming year include the movement into Phase 1B of the Bringing the Children Home project and, hopefully, digitization of a number of Indigenous community records. Processing backlog continues to be a priority, as does uploading descriptions and file lists to Access to Memory (AtoM). Coordination of centennial research and celebrations will likely take up a fair amount of time over the next year and a half. And, for some reason, research requests have been exponentially higher in the first three months of 2024. The reason for this is unknown, but it may be that awareness of the archives is increasing. Positive word-of-mouth and discussions about the responsiveness of The United Church of Canada to Indigenous research requests, may play a part in pointing researchers to the archives.

Submitted by Leanne Templeton, Archivist



Stewardship Report

Vicki Nelson, Community of Faith Stewardship Support

- Highlights:**
- \$20.8 million raised in 2023 for Mission and Service!
 - *Called to be the Church: The Journey* Stewardship program

- Key Links:**
- [Mission and Service stories](#) posted monthly
 - Sign up for monthly Stewardship Newsletter: [God's Mission, Our Gifts](#)
 - Contact Vicki: vnelson@united-church.ca



I am delighted once again to bring news from the stewardship support team, the United Church Foundation, and Mission and Service to the good people of Northern Spirit.

Over the past couple of years I have had the honour of meeting with many of you, whether as participants in a *Called to be the Church: The Journey* program, through a town hall, or simply because we connected via email or over the phone. If we haven't yet met, my role is to provide resources and support to individuals, communities of faith, and other ministries in the areas of generosity, congregational giving, Mission and Service, and the work of the United Church Foundation. If you have ideas, questions or inspiration to share, please [get in contact with me](#).

One way I would love to connect in 2024 and beyond is through the learning programs, *Called to be the Church: The Journey*. We currently have 4 course offerings that provide training and support for different parts of the stewardship journey. Whether you want to learn some stewardship-first principles, get resources to run a congregational Giving Program, or are hoping to set up a Legacy Giving Program in your community of faith, we have training options for you!! One participant provided this program feedback, "*Fear no more! Your stewardship questions answered! Deep insight AND solid skill building! A must for ministries of every description!*" [You can learn more here](#).

Speaking of gratitude for shared abundance, Mission and Service is our Church's most powerful vehicle for helping to transform lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world. Together we do more. Thanks to generous people like you 2023 saw \$20.8 million raised, including Mission and Service givings totalling \$17 million and bequests, Foundation and other planned gifts totaling \$3.7 million.

Locally, Mission and Service funds supported a number of amazing ministries in Northern Spirit. Camping ministry at Camp Whitney and Maskepetoon, Edmonton Interfaith Centre, and the life shaping work happening at the Bissell Center to name a few of the transformative programs supported with your Mission and Service donations. Thank you!

Setting giving goals and sharing inspiring stories about Mission and Service are effective ways to hold up and celebrate this amazing work, and to encourage deeper generosity in your community of faith. New Stories of our Mission are [posted monthly](#). If you want to bring more conversations about stewardship, gratitude, generosity and Mission and Service into your community of faith, consider signing up for the monthly newsletter [God's Mission, Our Gifts](#).

Finally, I want to share some of the exciting work of the United Church Foundation. Among the regular work of the Foundation (like providing grants to programs at Edson United Church, and St. Paul's in Peace River), 2023 saw some exciting new developments. There are now twice-monthly webinars to share stories and build skills. The Foundation also hit the milestone of \$100 million invested. Going into 2024 there is also a special granting program to support communities of faith with their centennial events.

Thank you, Northern Spirit Region friends. I am so grateful for your spirit, creativity, generosity, and thoughtfulness. I look forward to learning together in 2024.

In gratitude,

Vicki Nelson, Community of Faith Stewardship Support Staff for Northern Spirit Region

VNelson@united-church.ca * 1-800-268-3781 ext. 2045



**Mission
and Service**



Northern Spirit Regional Council

Property Commission



Report to the Council May 2024

Highlights:

- Church buildings sold in Rochester, Sangudo, and South Cooking Lake
- Current Property projects
- Salvaged wood from Sion United, Barrhead County

Key Links:

- [More Property Commission Information](#)
- [Property Resources & Guides](#)
- Contact Martha Dawson, Chair: meldawson@gpnet.ca



Church for Sale – This sign appeared in several small communities as the demographics changed and the communities of faith became no longer viable. Churches were sold in Rochester, Sangudo, and South Cooking Lake and the proceeds donated to other churches in the area, community cemeteries, and local social agencies as well as the Regional Council, Indigenous ministries, and Mission and Service.

At the time of this report the Property Commission is receiving information on an affordable seniors housing project on property leased to Jasper United and a commercial project on part of the property owned by Spirit West in Edmonton. The Commission recently approved a new land survey for Ardrossan United for the mutual benefit of it and Strathcoma County. It also approved a capital project of solar panels at Spirit of Hope in Edmonton.

It came to the attention of the Property Commission the plight of the historic Sion United Church in Barrhead County. It was uniquely constructed of logs placed vertically. The roof was in very poor condition and the inside damaged by moisture. After some research as to the interest of the local people in trying to restore the building the decision was made to dismantle it. A person interested in salvaging the wood took it down and cleaned up the site. (Google Sion United Church if you are interested in the history).

Questions about purchasing, selling, or renovating church property may be answered on the Regional Council website - see "About Us" and scroll down to "[Property Commission](#)". A comprehensive resource "[Property Matters – a guide for communities of faith growing, dispersing, or recreating](#)" is available there. Please check the website when contemplating the sale of property. You could also speak to any member of the Property Commission.

The Property Commission lost two of its charter members this year. Rev. Greg Parker died in August. Erin White, a long time member of Yellowhead Presbytery retired from volunteering in

in the Church. We miss their insight and faithful participation. The present members are Bob Miller (recording secretary), Jim Belliveau, Susan Waldie, and Steve Lyster. We are very grateful for the guidance of Executive Minister, Shannon McCarthy and Financial Administrator Heather Dootoff who attend our meetings and work between meetings to support property issues in the Region.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha Dawson for the Property Commission.



Photos by Steve Lyster

2024 REPORTS FROM NORTHERN SPIRIT REGIONAL COUNCIL

Northern Spirit Regional Council
of the United Church of Canada

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