

**Northern Spirit Executive Minutes
December 23, 2023 via Zoom**

| | |
|---|---|
| EXECUTIVE PRESENT | Helen Reed (Chair), Mary Annan, Margaret-Anne Hall, Leslie Penny, Peter Chynoweth, Donna Kline, A quorum was present. |
| REGRETS | None |
| CORRESPONDING MEMBERS | Gaie Goin, Jim Belliveau |
| STAFF PRESENT | Shannon McCarthy (Executive Minister); Julie Graham (Justice & Communications Minister); Heather Dootoff (Finance Administrator), Chloe Burns (Administrative Support); Chantal Winslow (Executive Assistant & Recording Secretary), Adam Hall (Pastoral Relations Minister); |
| CALL TO ORDER | Helen called the meeting to order at 9:35 am. We checked in and Helen led us in reflection & prayer. |
| APPROVAL OF AGENDA | We reviewed the agenda. |
| APPROVAL OF MINUTES 018-2023/2024 | It was agreed by consensus: That Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive approve the minutes of October 11, 2023 and November 1, 2023 as edited. |
| BUSINESS ARISING Reconciliation at cemetery update | Shannon had a phone call with the gentlemen who called her about reconciliation efforts at a cemetery in Edmonton. She directed him to Indigenous Council and Indigenous partners. Nothing moving forward right now but his intent it to erect a reconciliation monument. |
| CORRESPONDENCE Camp Maskepetoon | Camp Maskepetoon sent an invitation for us to join their AGM which took place in November. Receive for information. |
| Chinese United | There was a letter to Chinese United sent from Adam Hall. Adam will update us more in his report later in the meeting. Received for information. |
| FINANCE | An updated financial report was received for information. |
| Emergency Fire Contributions | We have received about \$4500. Has a letter gone out? Chantal drafted letter on September 26 and sent to Helen. Letter has not gone out. Chantal will work with Helen and Chloe to get the letter out this week. |
| COMMITTEE REPORTS | |

- Chairs** Helen has been invited into the conversation with Chinese United. More information will come from Adam later in the meeting.
- Helen will be supervising Provost. She has connections with them so it makes sense.
- Community of Faith Support** Wendy was unable to attend the meeting today. Adam provided some information regarding Green Grove United Church.
- We will table this conversation until January. Helen has asked the Executive to take some time to really think about what we would like to do in this situation and come back to our meeting in January ready to have that discussion.
- We will also revisit the conversation around what parameters need to be in place for assisting churches who may need to close.
- Youth** NA
- Property** A lot of churches are trying to slim down and economize. No churches are currently looking at disbanding.
- Camp Maskepetoon is in negotiations with Chief Saddleback. They are looking at a possible gifting of the land or subdivision of the land. Camp Lahilo will become theirs which will allow them to continue summer kids programming.
- Rochester has allocated funds and approved distribution from the sale of their church.
- Korean United is looking to sell their two properties. There are conditions that need to be met before selling.
- Grand Prairie update. The building they are looking at selling could be on the market around \$1.6 million. Permission was given to start looking at selling. Encouraging discussions with Kindred Works.
- Incorporated Ministries** Bissell Center – We have completed all of the legal responsibility with Bissell Center. We continue to have a relationship with them. The severance agreement has been finalized.
- Coronation Hardisty – They have not been responding to our requests for documentation. Helen will connect with Shannon to provide some contact information for us to try.
- Innercity – Comfort letter has been received. A comfort letter absolves us of any responsibility with their corporation.
- St. Pauls Foundation – Comfort letter has been received.

019-2023/2024

**It was agreed by consensus:
That Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive approve the following actions:**

Camp Whitney, St. Paul Presbytery

**... pursuant to the Incorporated Ministries Policy of The United Church of Canada
approve the Camp Whitney, St. Paul Presbytery 2022-2023 Board of Directors**

James Belliveau

Sandra Bishop

Sydney Milton

Alan Mytz

Val Mytz

Rheta Prill

Walter Prill

Janelle Schmeltzer

Megan Tetlock

Douglas Webb

Douglas (DJ) Webber

This is based on the AGM Meeting Minutes of November 26, 2022, the 2022 board member approval form, contact list provided and receipt of other required documentation per the Incorporated Ministries Policy of The United Church of Canada.

G U C Playschool Society

**...pursuant to the Incorporated Ministries Policy of The United Church of Canada
approve the G U C Playschool Society 2023-2024 Board of Directors**

Amanda Burzynski

Darrel Howell

Catherine Kinsman

Karen Ollen

Doug Weir

This is based on the draft Annual Meeting minutes of November 1, 2023, the 2023 board member approval form, contact list provided and receipt of other required documentation per the Incorporated Ministries Policy of The United Church of Canada.

Nominations

Helen has reached out to Brenda but has not heard back.

**Mission Support
 Grants Committee**

| 2023 Mission Support Grants Worksheet | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------|
| Mission Unit | 2021 Actual Grant | 2022 Actual Grant | 2023 Grant Approved | 2024 Unit Request | 2024 Grant Approved | Notes |
| Athabasca United Church | / | / | / | \$50,000 | \$25,000 | |
| Bissell Centre, Edmonton | \$40,000 | \$40,000 | \$40,000 | \$40,000 | \$20,000 | |
| Camp Maskepetoon | \$7,500 | \$7,000 | \$11,600 | \$25,000 | \$23,000 | |
| Camp Whitney | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$25,000 | \$55,000 | \$23,000 | |
| Edmonton Interfaith Centre | \$5,000 | \$2,500 | \$2,500 | \$2,500 | \$2,500 | |
| Hillcrest United Church, Fort Nelson | \$18,750 | \$25,000 | \$25,000 | \$25,000 | \$15,000 | |
| Inner City Pastoral Ministry, Edmonton | \$30,000 | \$25,000 | \$20,000 | \$25,000 | \$20,000 | |
| Kirk United Church Centre, Edmonton | \$10,000 | \$5,000 | \$10,000 | \$20,000 | \$7,500 | |
| Totals | \$138,750 | \$121,750 | \$134,100 | \$242,500 | \$136,000 | |
| Grant Available | \$150,000 | \$150,000 | \$150,000 | \$136,000 | \$136,000 | |
| Available for Emerging Needs | \$11,250 | \$28,250 | \$15,900 | -\$106,500 | \$0 | |

The Mission Support Grants Committee provided the numbers to the Executive for approval.

Chose not to give Athabasca their total ask of \$50,000 with the understanding that there some work being done around a collaborative ministry model that includes Athabasca.

Jim requested that the committee provide criteria for what the Committee looks at for funding.

020-2023/2024

**It was approved by consensus:
 That the Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive approve the Mission Support Grant amounts for 2024.**

**Lay Support
 Committee**

Adam and the committee have put time and effort into revising the Licensed Lay Leader Policy. We received this ahead of our meeting. The notable changes are:

- Modeled after Living Skies policy
- Changes include allowing LLWL to also be Sacrament Elders in their home congregation, pay will be reflective of the pulpit supply amount set by GC, allow 18 services in one community a year rather than 10 (most other regions only allow 10, Living Skies allows up to 25) but 18 falls under \$5000 a year, which doesn't draw the attention of CRA wanting to see proper payroll being used. It also allows for consecutive services in seasons like Advent/Lent. We will move to a one-year initial license, and then a two-year renewal. It cleans up questions we received about what is and isn't needed in terms of credentials i.e.- Racial justice and boundaries training, criminal record check and completion of the LLWL policy.
- Of the 91 pastoral charges in NS 55 of them are under Regional Supervision. Which highlights the need of lay worship leadership
- Approval of this policy will then instigate changes to the Sacrament elder policy and the Pulpit supply policy.

021-2023/2024

**It was approved by consensus:
That the Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive approve the changes to the Licensed Lay Leadership Policy as presented.**

**Pastoral Relations
Committee**

Designated Lay Minister Policy has been revised.

This is in response to the recent changes and suggestion from general secretary that regions need to support DLM's in retirement.

The program is still in effect but they will not be accepting anybody new into the program.

022-2023/2024

**It was approved by consensus:
That the Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive approve the changes to the Designated Lay Minister Policy as presented.**

Other

STAFF REPORTS

Executive Minister

Staff Gathering was held in Saskatoon in November with a focus on creating a 3 year plan for building community, engaging volunteers, and communication. We talked about ways to encourage clusters and encourage people to gather. We hope to hold events across the RC with worship, education, and community building components.

The moderator's flourishing event was originally planned to be for both Chinook Winds and Northern Spirit at the same time. However, in conversation the Moderator feels that there will be better attendance if they are separate and there is less travel for one RC or the other. The new date is May 2/3, 2025. The Moderator also looks to find a place to preach on the Sunday so if there are possibilities for that.

Adam and I have connected Jordan Cantwell, growth animator with a group of churches in South-West Edmonton to encourage conversation. They were going to connect on Zoom and then move to the possibility of an in-person gathering in the new year.

Remit numbers are increasing, staff are working on finding ways to connect to PC's who haven't voted (reminder that it is Pastoral Charges that vote not Congregations) so that we can keep on top of things in the New Year and ensure that we get as many Pastoral Charges to vote as possible. Thanks to all who attended the Zoom Remit gathering – and thanks to Julie and other staff who put it together.

Due to the transition of staff and a reduced need for office space we have terminated our lease with Kirk Centre effective March 31, 2024 and are in the process of getting office space at Strathearn United, we can get two offices for \$500 a month which is significant savings.

**Pastoral Relations
Minister**

Pastoral relations minister report: Executive Dec 13th, 2023

- Attended the Regional Staff retreat in Saskatoon from Nov 7 -10, 2023 in Saskatoon. This was a great opportunity to meet the whole staff team and start to build connections for the future.

- Couple of exciting conversations that are underway. Garneau United Church has reached out to McDougal United Church, without the prompting on the region, to look at a possible future together. They have a join meeting that I will be attending on January 13th. In connection with our growth animator, Jordan Cantwell, a conversation has been encouraged for a number of the communities of faith in the west of Edmonton, (Trinity, Spirit West, St. Andrew's, Winterburn, Garneau) these communities will be initially meeting with myself and Jordan in mid-January to talk about their visions, hopes and realities. I also received an email from Dawson Creek asking the region to begin a conversation with much of our northern communities of faith around rethinking how they are the church in that geographical region.

- I have also built a relationship with our ecumenical partners within our region and this has resulted in a number of conversations about ecumenical shared ministries within our region, namely looking at Hinton, RSV, Dawson Creek, Jasper.

- Our weekly online Clergy Gatherings have continued on Tuesday afternoons. Leadership for this is shared between myself and Laura Fohse, our Office of Vocation Minister.

- November 16th the PRC offer an online training session on Community of faith Profiles which was well attended.

- Additionally, I have had a complaint about the costs of the supervisors and would appreciate from guidance from the executive about how to respond. (Possibly table till January)

**Justice &
Communications**

Summer and fall 2023 report attached.

Nominations has reached a crisis point. We are supposed to be planning an affirming celebration but we aren't able to do that unless we have a functioning nominations process. Will really need to take a critical look at the Affirming planning in January if we are hoping to have the celebration in June. A call out will go out in the newsletter.

Prep for pie day with the other two regions which will include Northern Spirit. The dates would be either January 9th or January 31st.

Thank you to Chantal and Chloe for their network support.

There will be a prayer cycle for the region set up.

OTHER

Online Regional Gathering 2024

We do not need to technically have one every year. However, this year we do need to have a meeting to vote for GCE Commissioners. Celebration of Ministry – we should likely have some ordination and commissioning.

Due to consistency we would like to meet in the spring, not wait until fall.

We have chosen to have our meeting over two evenings on May 2 and 9th. Will begin at 6:30 pm and hope to last no more than two hours.

Chinese United

You will remember that we did receive some communication from the Community Faith Support Committee that the Chinese United Church in Edmonton was struggling and asking for some support.

Adam reached out to them and has received correspondence back that the community of faith has already made significant steps towards disbanding as of December 31. However, they do not have a governing body or trustees. The two people who have been taking point on this are both leaving in the new year and there won't be anybody left to deal with this.

We need to put a commission in place to take over the governance and close the accounts etc. and then deal with the property pieces.

023-2023/2024

**It was approved by consensus:
That Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive accept the request for disbandment of Chinese United Church as of December 31, 2023.**

024-2023/2024

**It was approved by consensus:
That Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive will name a commission to take over the function of Chinese United Church until all the appropriate paperwork is done. And that Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive give Shannon McCarthy, Adam Hall and Helen Reed authority to find members for the commission.**

025-2023/2024

**It was approved by consensus:
That Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive give Donna Kline and Shannon McCarthy signing authority regarding all matters related to Chinese United Church effective January 1, 2024.**

Remit

Julie will send out the work plan to the Executive for those who are interested in hearing about it.

Another send out to contacts for pastoral charges would be helpful.
There will be two more learning circles in the new year.
Phone campaign to be arranged. Go through the list and see who is most unlikely to vote.

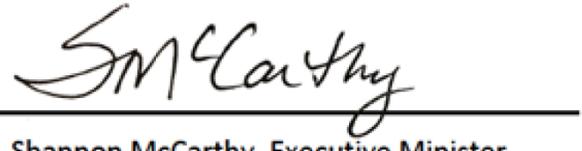
NEXT MEETING

Next meeting will be January 10, 2023 at 9:30 am.

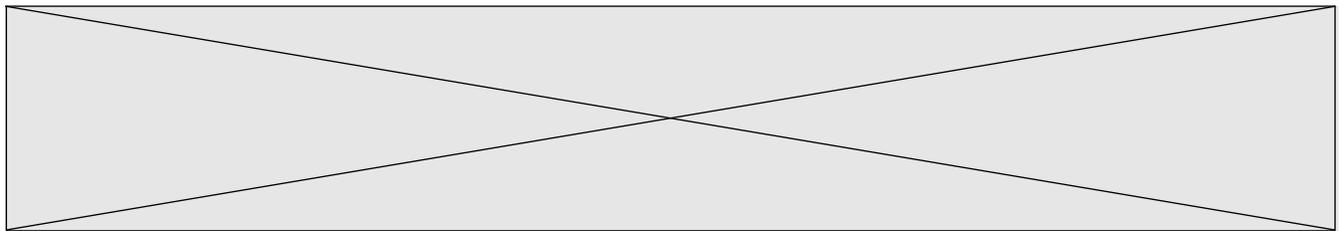
ADJOURNMENT



Helen Reed, Chairperson



Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister



2023 Northern Spirit Regional Council 31-Dec-22 2023 Budget 30-Nov-23 Projected 2024 Approved Budget

Governance Revenue

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Governance and Shared Services (from | \$ 325,000 | \$ 325,000 | \$ 270,833 | \$ 325,000 | \$ 325,000 | GC figures to Oct 31 |
| Shared Staff Grant Governance | \$ 90,775 | \$ 67,000 | \$ 55,833 | \$ 67,000 | \$ 67,000 | 2024 amount may increase |
| Annual Meeting Meal Fee | | \$ 25,000 | \$ 23,015 | \$ 23,015 | \$ - | |
| Misc | \$ 10,260 | \$ 5,000 | \$ 17,735 | \$ 17,735 | \$ 5,000 | |

\$ 426,035 \$ 422,000 \$ 367,416 \$ 432,750 \$ 397,000

Governance: Office and Staffing Expenses

Office Expenses:

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------|
| Office Rent (Kirk Centre) | \$ 38,745 | \$ 38,748 | \$ 28,751 | \$ 31,365 | \$ 31,365 | |
| Office Costs (supplies, phone, wifi, et | \$ 12,408 | \$ 13,500 | \$ 8,047 | \$ 12,000 | \$ 13,500 | |
| Shared Service GC | \$ 11,167 | \$ 11,000 | \$ 11,605 | \$ 12,660 | \$ 14,000 | GC figures to Oct 31 |
| Website | \$ 1,007 | \$ 1,005 | \$ 1,132 | \$ 1,132 | \$ 1,500 | |
| Audit/Prof Services | \$ 6,576 | \$ 7,000 | \$ 9,859 | \$ 9,859 | \$ 11,000 | |
| Discretionary fund | | \$ 5,000 | \$ - | | \$ 5,000 | |

Shared Staff Costs

| | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|----------------------|
| Shared EM, Asst and Finance staff | \$ 91,603 | \$ 101,820 | \$ 86,357 | \$ 103,128 | \$ 105,414 | GC figures to Oct 31 |
| Shared Staff Office Costs (office spac | \$ 923 | \$ 3,500 | \$ 849 | \$ 2,000 | \$ 2,000 | |
| Shared Staff Travel Costs | \$ 2,386 | \$ 7,000 | \$ 7,385 | \$ 10,000 | \$ 9,000 | |

Staffing

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Regional Staff - Governance | \$ 147,463 | \$ 155,617 | \$ 124,572 | \$ 144,986 | \$ 154,508 | GC figures to Sept 30 |
| All Staff Con-Ed | \$ 459 | \$ 4,000 | \$ 359 | \$ 2,000 | \$ 3,553 | |
| All Staff Training Event | \$ 3,264 | | \$ 1,953 | \$ 3,500 | | |
| Staff Travel/meals | \$ 2,289 | \$ 4,000 | \$ 4,963 | \$ 7,000 | \$ 7,000 | |

Governance: Committee and Structure

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------|
| Annual meeting | \$ 958 | \$ 60,000 | \$ 35,271 | \$ 35,271 | \$ 16,000 | 15K to set aside for 2025 |
| Governance Committee costs | \$ 1,949 | \$ 12,000 | \$ 1,853 | \$ 4,000 | \$ 8,000 | |

TOTAL GOVERNANCE \$ 321,197 \$ 424,190 \$ 322,956 \$ 378,902 \$ 381,840

Remainder of Governance Total \$ 104,838 \$ (2,190) \$ 44,460 \$ 53,848 \$ 15,160

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------------|
| Mission & Ministry (Mission & Service F | \$ 240,000 | \$ 239,000 | \$ 221,389 | \$ 240,000 | \$ 180,000 | GC figures to Oct 31 |
| Other M & M Income | \$ 415,778 | | \$ 54,796 | \$ 54,796 | | |
| | \$ 655,778 | \$ 239,000 | \$ 276,185 | \$ 294,796 | \$ 180,000 | |

Mission and Ministry Costs for Region 2

Staffing

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|----------------------|
| Salaries and benefits | \$ 110,757 | \$ 123,046 | \$ 89,671 | \$ 107,605 | \$ 110,607 | GC figures to Oct 31 |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|----------------------|

Mission & Ministry

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Mission Support grants | \$ 136,750 | \$ 150,000 | \$ 134,100 | \$ 134,100 | \$ 136,000 | GC figures to Oct 31 |
| M&S/Indigenous from sales/closures | \$ 304,328 | | \$ 19,993 | \$ 19,993 | | |
| Clusters & Events, other grants* | \$ 18,383 | \$ 20,000 | \$ 43,627 | \$ 46,770 | \$ 20,000 | |
| Mission & Ministry Committee Costs | | \$ 5,000 | \$ 2,288 | \$ 4,000 | \$ 6,000 | |
| | \$ 570,218 | \$ 298,046 | \$ 289,679 | \$ 312,468 | \$ 272,607 | |

Remainder of Mission & Ministry Total \$ 85,560 \$ (59,046) \$ (13,494) \$ (17,672) \$ (92,607)

Restricted/Designated Funds

| | | | | | |
|----------|-----------|--|------------|------------|--|
| Revenue | \$ 79,766 | | \$ 17,800 | \$ 17,800 | |
| Expenses | \$ 61,194 | | \$ 23,119 | \$ 23,119 | |
| | \$ 18,572 | | \$ (5,319) | \$ (5,319) | |

Combined Surplus (Deficit) \$ 208,970 \$ (61,236) \$ 25,647 \$ 30,857 \$ (77,447)

2024 details

\$60,000 cut to Mission and Ministry grant
2% increase in salaries
Conservative estimate of revenue
Deficit to be covered by retained earnings

2022 details

Surplus largely due to funds received from property sales

NORTHERN SPIRIT REGIONAL COUNCIL

DESIGNATED LAY MINISTERS

POLICY PROPOSAL

from the Pastoral Relations Commission

1. When a person who is recognized by the Northern Spirit Regional Council as a Designated Lay Minister (DLM) is not in a pastoral relationship, including those who retired as a DLM:
 - a. the Northern Spirit Regional Council will add them to the lay Membership Roll of the region as per C.1.2.b of The Manual; and
 - b. the Northern Spirit Regional Council will grant them license to administer the sacraments as per I.2.4.1.b of The Manual; as long as the DLM resides within the region.
2. When a person under section 1 above:
 - a. provides *pulpit supply* to a Community of Faith within the Northern Spirit Region, they are to be compensated as a “Visiting Ministry Personnel” as per the *Minimum Salaries & Reimbursements for Ministry Personnel* policy.
3. When a person under section 1 above:
 - a. desires a licence to marry they are to follow the same *voluntary associated ministry* process as retired ordered ministers.

C.1.2 Lay Members

The lay members of the regional council are members of the United Church who are not ministry personnel and who are

- b) additional lay members as determined by the regional council if necessary to respect a balance of ministry personnel and lay members who are not ministry personnel in the membership of the regional council.

I.2.4 Licences to Administer Sacraments

I.2.4.1 Policy

The regional council may grant a licence to administer the sacraments to

- b) lay people who were serving as a designated lay minister at the time of their retirement and who had been recognized by the regional council as a designated lay minister;

RATIONAL

Most people in Communities of Faith do not distinguish between DLMs and Ordered Ministers.

Many/most DLMs feel called to lifelong vocational ministry.

Currently when a Designated Lay Minister is in a pastoral relationship, they are considered *Ministry Personnel* with similar responsibilities and benefits as Diaconal and Ordained Ministers. When they are not in a pastoral relationship, they are not considered Ministry Personnel, but lay members of the congregation where their Membership resides. In most cases, the DLM has not been active in their *home* congregation for many years.

This regional policy proposal (section 2) arose out of a concern that there was no clear guidance about what a DLM should be paid when offering pulpit supply given that neither the Salary and Allowance Schedule or the Licensed Lay Worship Leaders policies apply to DLMs.

This regional policy proposal (sections 1 and 3) is a response to General Council 44 (at its meeting on October 21, 2023) approving proposals:

1. recognizing the lifelong vocational call of many DLMs and honouring and valuing their many years of faithful service to the church; and
2. creating a process for DLMs or DLM Candidates who have discerned a lifelong vocational call to ministry to be considered qualified and ready for Ordained or Diaconal Ministry; and
3. requesting regional councils permit currently recognized DLMs and current DLM students who do not request ordering to move to different Communities of Faith; and
4. encouraging the Office of Vocation to direct people without an undergraduate degree, who are discerning a call to lifelong church wide ministry, towards ordered ministry preparation and formation (fyi: most UCCan theological schools do not require an undergraduate degree for entry into degree and diploma programs leading to commissioning or ordination); and
5. **strongly encouraging regional councils to consider granting license to administer sacraments and membership in the regional council to those who retired as DLMs and reside within the region; and encouraging regional councils to review their policies on voluntary associate ministry and eligibility to practice other functions of ministry as may apply to those who have retired as DLMs.**

Justice and communications report- Summer and Fall 2023

Greetings to all three Executives! I'm going to give you one report covering all three Regional Councils, as well as shared projects. – Julie Graham, Regional Minister, November 2023

Fall is always intense for everyone, but this one was exceptional, hence my radio silence and skipping Executive meetings. We're back to in-person events, fundraising in person is back in full swing, as evidenced by our community of faith calendars, and in general everyone in the networks I support has been shockingly busy. In the midst of this, we have seen important United Church local presence at some difficult moments this fall, particularly alongside targeted communities, and for that I am so grateful. In the moments when all we can see is scarcity, I think we need to celebrate that deep and spirit-ed commitment to our ministry in our communities.

Cross-regional work

National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering: I was honoured to attend this gathering in Edmonton in July. I was present to listen and, as it turned out, to help with photos. This was a very important space in which to listen, and to sit with questions and plans regarding the Remit (next section) and the importance of urban as well as on reserve churches and spiritual communities.





Remit on an autonomous Indigenous organization

This is a crucial piece that has passed to communities of faith now that our three Regional Council votes in May and June passed. It will be a priority through the end of March 2024. We have a resource page for each website as of mid October, and at least two and hopefully three open learning sessions online are planned. The admin team pulled together new contact sheets prioritizing pastoral charge governing body contacts, and we sent out a letter to all pastoral charges. It is likely we will need to join all other Regional Councils in phoning campaigns early in 2024. While this will be a lot of work, it does allow us to be in touch with communities of faith who are not regularly in touch with the Regional Council, and to check in with them.



Western Intercultural Ministries Network gathering

For the first time in four years, this network held an [in-person gathering](#) of about 33 people in St Albert AB, from all five Western Regional Councils. It was a very rich time of singing and worship, ceremony and sharing in meals, and honest conversation about the intercultural church we long for. I wish more people had come; this gathering felt to me like the church as it could be, and like the renewal we all long for. It was worth the hours of work, but we clearly have to think through the sheer number of events happening. I was grateful for Chantal, Chloe, and Heather's help with some of the logistics and the tangled finances.

Dealing with very public transphobia: Affirming work got off to a fast start with the country-wide September 21 transphobic demonstrations against inclusive school curricula and lenses, dubbed the “Million Person Marches”. Counter demonstrations and messaging were organized across the country too, and included extensive United Church participation, including in our Regional Councils. This was the latest expression of a now years-long sharp increase in hate movements targeting 2SLGBTQIA+ and, particularly, gender-diverse people.



The disturbing difference in September was the presence of many children brought by their parents, and of many Muslims and Sikhs, despite the known Christian supremacist bias of some of the local organizers. While there was concern that this new branch of the overall hate movement might gain significant traction, when a second round of demonstrations was held in October, there was far less take up. This was in part due to Muslim organisers pulling back in the wake of the attacks and violence in Israel and the Occupied Territories, but infighting appears to be a factor too. That said, we know school boards,

librarians, teachers, and administrators will continue to be targeted by a movement striving to mimic strategies honed in the US. *(Photo: UCC people at the Saskatoon “Million Person March counter demonstration.)*

In all three Regional Councils, the Affirming work is at an awkward leadership transition time, with less take up for the work than we would have liked despite a lot of Nominations work during and after our

Regional meetings. I called a tri-Region meeting of the Affirming networks to try to support local action against these demonstrations.



Sixty people came out at short notice, and many excellent ideas and commitments were shared. I cannot express how grateful I am to our local Affirming leadership (wherever they are or are not in the formal process.) Extensive social media commentary indicated that United presence was noted by many non-church people attending the counter demonstrations, though many would have liked to see more, or assumed the UCC was not present unless it clearly self identified. Our Public, Intentional, and Explicit commitments do have a wider public impact in their presence or absence.

(Photo: St Andrew's College staff at the Saskatoon "Million Person March counter demonstration.)

I want to stress the impact this is having in our communities of faith, whether for trans members, their loved ones, their supporters, or for governance bodies and ministers who find themselves in very insistent and disruptive one-sided conversations about the threat 2SLGBTQIA rights pose. We have heard this from a number of different sources. I am struggling to know how the Regional Councils can address this given the few people who have been able to step forward for Affirming leadership.

Palestine and Israel: October and November have seen a lot of communications work about this desperate situation. I have mostly just worked with national communications, but also created a post to our websites [highlighting the ceasefire call](#) following some requests. Generally, in all three Regional Councils only a dedicated handful of people work on this situation, mostly in Living Skies. Relationships with local synagogues and rabbis add complexity to this work, especially in Winnipeg. We rarely hear requests to prioritize this work. This makes it a lower priority amongst the many other justice needs we try to address, which is a hard truth to accept when we see the scale of the violence and the number of human rights violations that Palestinians live with day to day.

Communications

All of the above involves communication. A lot of my work in this area also involves Regional newsletters and newsletters and contact management for networks I support. Occasional consulting with local coalitions or committees who want to know what channels we can use to support them, or how best to set up their own channels, is always fun and a good learning space. Site maintenance and media tracking run in the background all the time, as does feeding and tending to the social media beasts.

A need for a style guide and best practices for language regarding disabilities and other diverse identities has become clear. Related to this, yet bigger: **Inclusive and accessible meetings and the need for guidelines/ resources:** this came up following all three in-person regional meetings. There is a lot we can and must do to help meetings of all sizes and formats be fully accessible, and a lot of interest in working on this. We need some reminders and guides pulled together in one place.

Cluster development: this perennial need is getting more urgent. At our November staff planning we talked about the need to form teams and prioritise initial Cluster meetings, complete with a free lunch, mileage, and worship. One aspect of this work needs to be creating contact lists within the Cluster area- a need that is very pressing in urban areas.

Northern Spirit



Affirming/ Celebration of Ministries:

The Affirming celebration that is the final step in our formal process was planned alongside the Celebration of Ministries service in October. It was postponed because of mixed messages about who was responsible for leading on this, and low capacity for fast-paced work at a very busy time of year. I will consult with the past task group; in the absence of a functioning permanent Affirming committee (see below), we need to find a planning group who can carry this important last step in a way that includes the whole Region.

But- Affirming was very much a part of the celebration of ministries service, thanks to liturgist Helen and

decorators Louise and Larry. We will get to our celebration, and move into continuing to live into being Affirming.

Being Good Relations Network: I was asked to facilitate a visioning for the future with the leadership circle, and we had a very good conversation about the dilemmas confronting ongoing truth-telling/ listening work, right relationships, and engaging our congregations and communities in advocacy. A face to face gathering in 2024 is a priority for the group.

Areas that need some attention are:

Nominations: staffing support and more members needs to be sorted out.

Affirming: We didn't receive sufficient interest at the regional meeting to successfully form a new committee to carry our commitments.

Anti racism: we keep struggling to find a meeting time and enough people. A

Living Skies

Decolonization conference, Saskatoon Theological Union: In June I was honoured to co-facilitate a decolonization workshop at this conference, working with my Mennonite Central Committee colleague Amanda Dodge. The group was large, very engaged, and very thoughtful as we talked about

strategies and commitments for decolonizing church theology, structures, and advocacy. I was able to carry some of the learnings into a KAIROS Prairies North workshop in October, where we had further discussion about getting at the roots of settler-colonial structures and culture. Part of our ongoing work on the Decolonization Committee is the racist/ land grab roots of the Alberta and Saskatchewan “Sovereignty

Ochapowace and Cachacas culture camp and apology: We were invited by Ochapowace First Nation to offer an in-person apology at an August culture camp on the site of the former Camp McKay and Round Lake Residential School. Good Spirit Presbytery sold the camp to the First Nation for lower than market rate some years ago, and Ochapowace has been reclaiming the site. Rev Sarah Beynon Giles and Rev Jo Mader are fairly local to the area and offered to carry the apology on behalf of the Regional Council. We did some work on wording and protocol, and they spent the day at the intergenerational culture camp, along with Anglican, Presbyterian, and Catholic representatives. Thank you to both of them for stepping into a rich and complex commitment.

Justice Cttee: people have been very stretched and we finally had our first meeting in late November. More as this develops! There is a lot of good potential here.

Affirming: We had hoped to have a fall transition meeting to move from a task group to a committee that would work with our new Affirming status, which officially starts with our celebration, planned for May or June at the annual meeting. However, we do not currently have enough people for a new committee.

Regional meeting 2024: with the planning committee, I am working on the question of moving the dates so that the Moderator’s Flourishing project visit can be combined with the Regional meeting for better accessibility and connecting, especially for those making the effort to travel for the meeting. This would also allow us to welcome the Moderator for our meeting, Service of Praise, and Affirming Celebration.

Prairie to Pine

Search the landfill(s) and church leaders’ visit

In August the Moderator arranged for her fellow national church leaders to visit Camp Morgan, located at the Brady landfill near Winnipeg. This was done in light of the clear refusal of the then-provincial government to search the landfill, despite funding from other levels of government and a task force report that said the search was risky but feasible. It is worth noting here that by late summer, it was clear that the Conservative government had staked part of its re-election strategy on not searching. To say this was profoundly hurtful and racist is a gross understatement, and all involved were well aware that the church leaders wished to push back on this.

Regional staff worked to support this, using our channels to invite all in the Region who could come to Winnipeg to join the leadership of Camp Morgan and the church leaders the day after Labour Day. Media liaison work was done out of the General Council office with onsite assistance from Regional staff. At least 200 people came out from the community, despite it being a work day and despite a very strong and cold wind. The participation was very diverse and included many United Church people.



Since that time, camp leaders have been concerned by what they have felt is no church follow up. We know that a number of Winnipeg people have visited the camp, brought food, and donated. Yet most are likely not self identifying as church members in any of those actions. This remains an overall dilemma with our public presence as church, and we've seen the same pattern in Affirming work. If we don't clearly self-identify, people assume we aren't there. But we hesitate to self-identify, because often the communities we are with are targeted, and we don't want our presence to be about us. After consulting with some Winnipeg supporters, I will be requesting that the Executive or chairperson send a letter to the people of the Regional Council,

encouraging them to donate, to visit, and to write their MLA, since a search is far better supported by the new government but is not confirmed even now.

Moderator visit: [Flourishing project](#). This is the Moderator's main project for her term, and Winnipeg events launched the work. Regional Councils are not involved in planning or deciding on locations and schedule, but we help promote the opportunities. Around 70 ministry personnel came

Partner Council visit: This is a General Council body that gives space for the voices and experiences of our global partners. We had no say in proposed dates for a partner visit, and after consultation with possible hosts in Brandon, we informed General Council that the visit could not work. Illness in the partner's family also meant that coming to the Prairies was not ideal for him. We hope we can host a longer partner visit in 2024 or 2025, with a focus that can include rural communities.

Climate justice: Following the annual meeting proposal to work on divestment, we need to create a group to carry this work, as staff alone cannot and should not carry it. I have been working with a few people on this, and we hope to make connections with youth and young adults, especially following the great work done by the three Climate Youth Motivators this summer.

Equity and Diversity Committee: this committee is re-forming and has extremely busy members- after a lot of work we found a common time to meet. Nominations poured a lot of work into finding new members, and despite that work was unable to find members who are Black, Indigenous, or people of colour. We will continue to work on how to connect with BIPOC people and communities.

Structures document: this beast of a project is slowly coming to completion thanks to Teresa Melnychuk and Pat Bird. We are tackling the job descriptions (part 3 of the document); these are intended to help the Nominations committee and anyone considering a position.



Northern Spirit - Licensed Lay Worship Leaders (LLWL) Policy (December 2023)

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Introduction and Purpose

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The Northern Spirit Regional Council is grateful to God for the willingness of lay people who come forward to offer their faith, insight and skill as worship leaders in communities of faith. The following document outlines the policy and standards of practice for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders who serve in the Northern Spirit Region. It is the hope of the region that these standards of practice will encourage, honour and inform the members of the Laity as they share their gifts and express their faith while meeting the vital need of a community of faith to gather for worship.

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The following standards of practice are divided into three sections: Membership; Preparation and Licensing; and Ongoing Support and Guidance. A key resource for these standards of practice is [Licensed Lay Worship Leaders](#), June 2019, The United Church of Canada.

Membership

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The Regional Council may license a person as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader. (*The Manual*, 2023, s. 1.1.11.5)

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The following requirements apply:

- the person must be a member of a [CongregCommunity of Faithation](#) in that regional council; and
- the license must be for a specified term, which may be renewed.

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A licensed lay worship leader serves under the direction of the Regional Council's Executive through the **Lay Leadership Support Committee**. If a licensed lay worship leader becomes a member of a community of faith in another regional council, that person must be recognized by that other regional council in order to continue serving as a licensed lay worship leader.

Preparation and Licensing

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Educational Requirements

The lay member completes a preparatory course that extends over at least two years and includes the study of theology, church history, Hebrew and Christian scriptures, preaching,

worship, and pastoral skills. The course of study must be approved by the Lay Leadership Support Committee, in consultation with United Church of Canada guidelines and practice. An approved national Licensed Lay Worship Leader training program is available online through United in Learning on ChurchX, ~~and can be found here~~ [The national LLWL training program can be found here.](#)

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An individual may be exempt from a preparatory course at the discretion of the Lay Leadership Support committee. An individual's education would be evaluated using the handbook, [Licensed Lay Worship Leaders](#) or future editions.

The lay member must also complete all mandatory workshops (currently: **R**acial **J**ustice and **B**oundaries training) and a police records check, according to policy set by the United Church of Canada, prior to initial licensing. These workshops may be completed concurrently with the preparatory course. For those seeking renewal of licenses, a 6-month grace period will be offered to complete the mandatory workshops. The Racial Justice training is only taken once, but the Boundaries Training must be refreshed every 5 years. In addition, an annual declaration of no criminal charges or convictions is required following the initial police records check.

Licensing

In order to be licensed for the first time, the lay person is required to provide the following:

- a) Written recommendation by the governing body of their community of faith;
- b) Written final evaluation by the facilitator of the preparatory course; and
- c) Verification of completion of mandatory workshops and police records check.

Once these documents are received by the Lay Leadership Support Committee, a temporary one-year license will be issued. After the completion of one year as a licensed lay worship leader, an interview will be scheduled with the lay person. The Regional Council Executive, through the Lay Leadership Support Committee, assesses the lay member's suitability and readiness for licensed lay worship leadership by examining their personal character, doctrinal beliefs, and educational competency. Based on the interview and accompanying documents:

- *affirmation from the community of faith*
- *sample worship service*
- *sample sermon*
- *annual declaration regarding criminal charges/criminal record,*

the Lay Leadership Support Committee will make a recommendation to the Regional Council Pastoral Relations Commission regarding issuing a regular license.

The Regional Council Pastoral Relations Commission issues a licence to the lay member to function as a licensed lay worship leader within the jurisdiction of the regional council, under the direction of the regional council. A licensed lay worship leader may function in any of the communities of faith in the Northern Spirit Regional Council as well as any of the organizations affiliated with it. A licence is normally valid for two (2) years and may be renewed. The regional

council recognizes the licensed lay worship leader at a service of worship, with participation from a member of the Regional Council.

Ongoing Support and Guidance

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Renewal

Licensed lay worship leaders require a conversation with the Lay Leadership Support Committee in order for their license to be renewed; the license is normally valid for two (2) years. The Lay Leadership Support Committee, which has been authorised to make recommendations to the Regional Council Pastoral Relations Commission, will determine what reporting is required for the purposes of license renewal. This could include bulletins, sermons, a list of training completed or resources read, as well as the annual declaration regarding criminal charges/ criminal record and the annual worship service tracker (listing which communities of faith have been served and when). An affirmation from the community of faith where the licensed lay worship leader is a member indicating support for their ministry is also required for re-licensing.

The Lay Leadership Support Committee will organize learning opportunities for licensed lay worship leaders from time -to -time. There are also online training opportunities that the Committee would recommend for support and encouragement. It is hoped that ongoing learning would be supported by the community of faith where the licensed lay worship leader is a member – this could include financial assistance to attend courses or to purchase resources.

Frequency of service, accountability, and remuneration

Pulpit supply is meant to be an occasional option for communities of faith and guidelines are further articulated in the [Pulpit supply policy of the Northern Spirit Regional Council](#). The definition of occasional and requirements for licensed lay worship leaders in a calendar year is outlined as follows:

| Number of services/ year in one community of faith | Accountability to Committee |
|--|---|
| 18 or less (No more than 3 consecutive services with an exception for seasons of Lent/ Advent) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biannual re-licensing conversation• Annual declaration of criminal record check• Annual worship service tracker form• Current mandatory trainings |
| 18 and above | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active M&P Committee• Requires classification as a Congregational Designated Minister (linked to handbook)• Could remain on Pulpit Supply list as a current LLWL for other communities of faith. Current mandatory training, annual declaration, and triennial re-licensing conversation would be required. |

Any licensed lay worship leader could access the Lay Leadership Support Committee for issues related to worship leadership. This could include specific concerns or general support, as appropriate.

The community of faith is encouraged to remunerate licensed lay worship leaders in accordance with the Minimum Salaries & Reimbursements rate for Visiting Ministry Personnel, including travel, issued by General Council each year. These amounts are listed on the [Minimum Salary and Reimbursement for Ministry Personnel](#) issued annually by The United Church of Canada. When leading multiple worship services for one community of faith, it is recommended that remuneration be offered above the minimum rate for one Sunday, but not necessarily the full rate for each worship service. This additional remuneration would include offering worship in a care home or other facility. If the service(s) is cancelled due to weather, it is expected that the fee would be offered for the work completed; travel and meal costs would not be included.

***Note:** The Canada Revenue Agency requires that a T4A be completed for annual aggregate amounts over \$500 paid to an individual, which would be approximately three worship services annually and above.

Annual worship service tracker form

It will be the responsibility of the licensed lay worship leader to track the number and location of worship services provided each calendar year. The annual worship service tracker form will be submitted to the Lay Leadership Support Committee in January. Conversations for support will be scheduled accordingly.

Other considerations

- A licensed lay worship leader may not provide **pastoral care** in a community of faith that is not their own. ~~understanding that pastoral relationships may have been established prior to licensing.~~ It is expected that the licensed lay worship leader will refer any requests or requirements for pastoral care (counseling, home visitation, hospital visitation) to the called or appointed ministry personnel, or the pastoral charge/ Community of Faith supervisor for follow-up.
- A licensed lay worship leader who is called to conduct **funeral services** is encouraged to take appropriate additional training. However, the conduct of funerals within a community of faith (including a funeral home), should abide by the funeral policy of the community of faith, and is to be arranged in consultation with the called or appointed ministry personnel or the pastoral charge/ community of faith supervisor of the community of faith. A licensed lay worship leader who conducts a funeral in connection to a community of faith must ensure that the information is entered in the Burial Register of the community of faith. It is the responsibility of the community of faith to provide pastoral care in these circumstances.
- Licensing does not include permission to preside at the sacraments; however, some licensed lay worship leaders are also sacraments elders in the community of faith where

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their membership rests. (see [Northern Spirit Regional Council Sacraments Policy](#))

Should a licensed lay worship leader provide worship leadership in their home community of faith that includes the celebration of one of the sacraments as a Sacraments Elder, they are to be reimbursed for the preparation and leadership of the worship service only. It is not the practice of the Northern Spirit Regional Council to be reimbursed for officiating the sacraments.

- Licensing does not provide a license to perform marriages.
- Licensing does not enable Licensed Lay Worship Leaders to wear a stole and a clergy collar, as those are reserved for ministry personnel, called or appointed to a community of faith.
- Failure to abide by this policy may result in the termination of the license.

Revised & Approved X 2023.

DRAFT