

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council Meeting
Friday, May 24, 2019
(Supporting, Connecting, Transforming)

The Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council was called to meet on Friday, May 24, 2019 at the Unifor Family Education Centre, 115 Shipley Ave, Saugeen Shores, as part of the Antler River Watershed, Horseshoe Falls, and Western Ontario Waterways first regional council annual meetings.

1. Call to Order

Laurie O'Leary welcomed everyone in attendance and opened the meeting at 4:08 PM.

2. Procedural Motions

Moved by: Rod Coates

Seconded by: Mark Laird

That the Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council:

1. Name Rod Coates as Secretary and Tim Reaburn as Parliamentarian.
2. Appoint Sarah Leffler as head scrutineer.
3. Name Chair Laurie O'Leary, Secretary Rod Coates, Parliamentarian Tim Reaburn, Head Scrutineer Sarah Leffler, Executive Minister Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer Sampa and Executive Assistant Sue Duliban as the Business and Agenda Committee.
4. Establish the bounds of the regional council as the Assembly Hall of the Unifor Family Education Centre.
5. Make all guests corresponding members.
6. Set 7:00 p.m. Friday as the close of nominations for President.
7. Set Noon Saturday as the deadline for the submission of new business.

CARRIED

As it was determined the meeting agenda had not been circulated, Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa provided a brief verbal overview of the proposed agenda for the Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council meeting of today and the next 2 days.

Moved by: Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa

Seconded by: Gerry Hofstetter

That the meeting agenda as presented be approved.

CARRIED

3. Moderator's Message

A video message from Moderator Right Reverend Richard Bott was presented, with comments and blessings for the first meetings of the new regional councils. Tim Reaburn noted that he is a General Council representative for the Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council, a situation which is not the case for all regional councils.

4. Meet the Candidates

Laurie O’Leary introduced Marsha Roberts and provided a brief biographical summary. Marsha related several stories about personal experiences at her community of faith (Ripley-Bervie-Kinloss), describing some of the active groups in the church, and how she was looking forward to working with the congregation, celebrating life events and walking with them. She also summarized briefly the faith journey which brought her to this day. Laurie O’Leary then introduced Rev. Nicholas Forrester (Central Westside United Owen Sound) and read his biographical sketch.

Nicholas spoke on the theme of “seasons”, noting that we look forward to the change of seasons in our part of the world and comparing the current season of decline for the church as a precursor to moving towards a season of spring and into a new birth.

5. Budget

Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa provided an overview of the regional council budget, explaining how the transition commission made its decisions regarding the allocation of its funds. She described the allocation of income from assessments and M&S funds, noting that there are assets yet to come from the remainder of presbyteries and conferences which awaiting audits prior to transfer of those funds.

Cheryl-Ann said that regional council operations expenses are required for the purpose of the operating the region, and that budgeted expenses were allocated in accordance with priorities, with a further detailed breakdown of assessment funds by: Congregational Support, Communication, Connecting; and breakdown of M&S allocations by: Right Relations, Camps/Youth, and Chaplaincy. She said that the budget estimates are generous based on previous amounts spent in conferences.

6. Governance

Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa provided an overview of the regional council’s Governance Handbook, beginning with the last two amendments made – separation of the Office of Vocation from the decision-making responsibilities, the addition of a Secretary position and alignment of Executive membership to mirror representation with that of General Council Executive with no specific groups represented in that body. She also commented on how the past president and president-elect roles would function in the Executive.

Executive

- To hold the vision for the regional council
- To manage the regional council resources with oversight of finances and staff complement
- To oversee the corporations of the region
- To plan the meetings of the region
- To function as the nominating committee for the regional council (*in future there will be elections*)
- To handle any matter referred to it by the Commissions

Covenant Commission

- To care for the covenant between communities of faith and the regional council
- The use of financial and property resources
- Local governance
- The overall health and well-being of communities of faith, such as changes in the life cycle, dealing with real property etc.
- To affirm the community of faith's Living Faith Story
- To review the community of faith's annual self-assessment

Human Resources Commission

- To support the pastoral relationship process through appointment of liaisons, approval of position descriptions, identifying of vacancies and approval of appointments and calls
- To resource United Fresh Start to strengthen new pastoral relationships
- To train, certify and oversee Licensed Lay Worship Leaders
- To categorize lay ministry positions

Mission & Discipleship Commission

- To provide resources and opportunities for communities of faith to engage with mission and ministry
- To provide resources and opportunities for United Church members of all ages to deepen their faith
- To enable the church to respond in a timely way to the world

Questions

- Sarah Leffler questioned the extent of secretary duties, noting that it is an important position, to which Rod Coates replied that the position had just recently been added to the Regional Council Executive and that duties would be sorted out at the next Executive meeting.
- Sandra McLauchlan-Abuja asked for clarification about the M&S funding, for which Tim Reaburn provided some comments about the various funding streams.
- Judy Zarubick raised a question about sacramental privileges – where those who are required to ask for their privileges to be extended need to go.
- Kate Crawford questioned where the funds from the previous presbyteries would be allocated.
- Greta Horton asked how many camps were contained within the Western Ontario Waterways region, and it was noted that there are three (Bimini, Menesetung & Silver Lake)

Today's agenda having been complete, Laurie O'Leary declared the meeting adjourned at 1:20 PM.

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council Meeting
Saturday, May 25, 2019
(Supporting, Connecting, Transforming)

1. Call to Order

Laurie O'Leary welcomed everyone in attendance and opened the meeting at 9:05 AM.

2. Gathering/Opening

Today's meeting opened with the gathering singing of Come Before the Lord with a Song. This was followed by a group prayer, as well as a centring prayer by Laurie O'Leary.

3. Honouring Retirees

Laurie O'Leary led the meeting through a period of acknowledging and honoring our retirees: Bonnie Holiday, Dave Loucks, and Ingrid Remkins. She then closed with a prayer giving thanks for the retirees and jubilands from the Western Ontario Waterways region.

4. President-Elect Nominee Speeches

The meeting heard short presentations from each of the three candidates who had submitted nomination papers: Kate Ballagh-Steeper, Gary Clark, & Mark Laird. Each spoke of their qualifications, experience, vision, and interest in the role. This was followed by distribution of paper ballots and voting for the regional council President.

5. Property Policy

Brent Caslick presented an overview of the Property Policy recently approved by the transition commission, as follows:

Major Renovations, Major Assets

50% of net income as reported December 31st of the previous calendar year and used for assessment purposes or \$200,000 whichever is lesser

Amalgamations

Normally all assets of the amalgamating communities of faith will go to the newly amalgamated community of faith.

Disbanding

After covering any unpaid assessments, community of faith indebtedness and the costs of selling real property, remaining assets will be disbursed as follows:

- 5% to Archives
- 30% to the United Church ministry(ies) of the community of faith's choosing (provided a registered charity)
- 15% to Indigenous Ministries in response to the Calls to the Church (received GC43) to support Indigenous Ministries and to upgrade Indigenous real property
- 12.5% to current year Mission & Service
- 12.5% to Mission & Service Endowment Fund to provide for the future
- 25% to the Regional Council to enable it to provide ongoing support and resources to Communities of Faith

Kate Crawford suggested the Archives amount be reduced from 5% to 2% and that the Indigenous Ministries & real property be increased by 3%. It was agreed to make this recommendation to the Executive to address in future. It was also agreed that the 25% to the Regional Council should include “new church development”.

Laurie O’Leary announced that the results of the first vote for regional council President had been received and that a second vote would be required. A second set of ballots was distributed.

6. Administrative Motions

Motions: Work of Transition Commission

Moved by: Rod Coates

Seconded by: Cathie Stewart-Savage

That Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council:

- 1) receive the minutes of the Transition Commission for information; and
- 2) affirm the work of the Transition Commission with thanksgiving for their vision and dedication.

CARRIED

Motions: Finances

Moved by: Brent Caslick

Seconded by: Ann Harbridge

That Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council direct the Executive:

- 1) to draft a plan for the use of the regional council’s financial resources that will support the work of the regional council and the ministries of its communities of faith; and
- 2) to present that plan for approval at the next meeting of the regional council.

CARRIED

(3 abstentions)

Motions: Vacancies

Moved by: Rod Coates

Seconded by: Tom Dunbar

That Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council authorizes the Executive to name individuals:

- 1) to the remaining vacancies on the Covenant Commission, Human Resources Commission and Mission and Discipleship Commission to ensure necessary skills are present and diversity in membership is promoted; and
- 2) to other roles requiring regional representation as necessary.

CARRIED

(1 abstention)

7. Self-Assessment Forms (John Neff)

John Neff led the meeting in a brief discussion regarding the Community of Faith self-assessment checklist, which had been previously distributed for comments. Some of the feedback received included:

- The form should include Health & Safety items such as WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Material Information Sheet)
- Several queries were raised regarding whether communities of faith could do all the things expected as part of the Self-Assessment, with the assessment that most churches cannot all meet these expectations.
- It was suggested that results be seen as a way to address deficiencies and areas for improvement.

Laurie O'Leary suggested that the comments be referred to the Covenant Commission.

Moved by: Norm Eygenraam

Seconded by: Cathy Hird

That the Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council refer the draft self-assessment tool to the Covenant Commission for finalization.

CARRIED

Laurie O'Leary announced results of the second ballot, stating that Gary Clark was elected President of Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council.

Moved by: Tim Reaburn

Seconded by: Rod Coates

That the vote be deemed unanimous and that all ballots be destroyed.

CARRIED

Today's agenda having been completed, Laurie O'Leary declared the meeting adjourned at 10:30 AM.

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council Meeting
Sunday, May 26, 2019
(Supporting, Connecting, Transforming)

1. Call to Order

Laurie O’Leary welcomed everyone in attendance and opened the meeting at 9:07 AM, noting that all our agenda and work to date has been on schedule. She reminded the meeting that there will be online evaluations to be completed to assess how this first regional council meeting went, and then opened with a centering prayer for the meeting.

2. MOTIONS: Affirm-Vision Statement

Moved by: Judy Zarubick

Seconded by: Heather Davies

That Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council adopt the Vision Statement “Safety, Sanctuary, Unconditional Love” as presented:

Safety, Sanctuary, Unconditional Love

Striving to be faithful followers of Jesus in our time and place, Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council will continue to remove barriers to participation in the life and work of the regional council and society, committing ourselves to be open to the Spirit. Resisting all forms of oppression, we welcome and celebrate people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and all others who are marginalized.

CARRIED

Moved by: Thérèse Samuel

Seconded by: Micol Cottrell

That Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council:

- 1) Directs the tri-regional council Affirming Ministries network to prepare an interim action plan for Antler River Watershed , Horseshoe Falls and Western Ontario Waterways regional councils as provisional Affirming ministries; and
- 2) Empowers the Mission and Discipleship Commission to work in partnership with the designated bodies of Antler River Watershed and Horseshoe Falls Regional Councils to approve the plan;
- 3) Encourages the communication of the plan throughout the regional council and requests an update on it for the next regional council meeting.

Kate Crawford articulated concern about tying this motion to the action of the other two regional councils. Tim Reaburn said that while the work was done within our region for our region, the hope is that the tri-region group works together. Thérèse Samuel said the language of the motion directs and empowers the Commission to carry out this work. Kevin Stepper said a similar discussion and answer had been provided at the Horseshoe Falls regional council meeting.

CARRIED

3. Covenant with Region

Laurie O’Leary referenced the draft community of faith covenant document. The following comments & suggestions were made:

- Neil Lackey suggested the addition of Earth & Air as symbols.
- Arthur Hills asked who would represent the community of faith, and who the regional council.
- Cathie Urbasik-Hindley suggested the addition of “earned and granted trust” to the Preamble.
- John Neff noted that there would be some latitude around Living Faith Story and the Community of Faith profile.
- Gary Clark noted similar documents are approved at the beginning of a new pastoral relationship.
- Cathy Larmond asked if there would be differentiation between the pastoral relationship covenanting and the community of faith covenanting, of if they would be similar. Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa said there could be opportunities to do so, but the primary responsibility of the document is to define how the regional council is to live in a covenant relationship with a community of faith.
- Michelle Braniff said that the congregational experience is often that of dealing with the “big church” which sometimes feels like lots of rules and forms, and that there should be opportunities to include items specific to a community of faith in a covenant. It was also noted that there ought to be language which refers specifically to a community of faith and be intentional about this.
- Cathie Savage said that the covenant work being proposed is good and noted that communities of faith also include outreach ministries and chaplaincies.
- Wanda Keith suggested that we be open to our symbols and not specific to just those presented in the draft.
- Sandra William noted that there was no mention of a bible as symbol.
- Thérèse Samuel suggested there be several symbols.

Moved by: Bonnie Holliday

Seconded by: Gerry Hofstetter

That Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council:

- 1) Refer the draft covenant to the Covenant Commission to finalize the template; and
- 2) Direct the Covenant Commission to initiate a plan to engage communities of faith with this covenant with a view to entering into a covenant with all communities of faith within Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council by June 30, 2022.

CARRIED

4. New Business – Faithful Ministry Personnel

Kate Crawford introduced a proposal from Huron Shores United Church, noting that the original presenters were unavailable, and adding that the background to the proposal arose from the 2018 settlement between Toronto Conference & Gretta Vosper. Arising from a dialogue with Kate and several members of her congregation, an action group was formed to address the key issue of trust.

The following comments were offered:

- Tim Reaburn made several comments about the concept of Essential Agreement, noting that General Council Executive has referred the matter for further review and that the larger question is about Faith. He referenced discussions of 1907 pre-Union meetings and said that the four doctrinal statements of the United Church are all subordinate standards because any statement of faith is understood to be subordinate to scripture.
- Neil Lackey thanked Huron Shores United Church for bringing this forward. He said that the mechanisms are already in place to address what Huron Shores wants, which is the search process, as well as the annual review and ongoing involvement of the M&P committee.
- John Loughheed noted that Essential Agreement is part of the invitation to ordain, commission & receive ministry personnel. He said it would be helpful to get further clarification about the agreement.
- Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa shared that the settlement is only available to the parties to the agreement and remains confidential. She said that the key outcome is that it is specific to one set of circumstances and the parties involved and does not affect doctrine or policy of the United Church. In other words, it is a settlement, not a decision.
- Michelle Braniff said that in this process this is a new narrative and there needs to be transparency around the faith of leaders.
- Meghan Gilholm said that the motivation of fear seems to be driving this proposal, that faith fluctuates, and that we need to trust that the spirit is at work.
- Gail Fricker said that mechanisms are in place during training, but there needs to be something in place after ordination hence the already-in-place M&P annual review.
- Sheryl Spencer said that she was thankful for this issue being raised but noted that no one has asked about her faith since ordination. She suggested the modifying the phrase to *“nurture and review the faith of Ministry Personnel”* in the proposal.
- Sarah Leffler remarked that this issue is a continuation of issues from other situations which have also upset congregations.
- Judy Zarubick said the word “review” seemed punitive.
- Kate Crawford asked for the options of addressing this proposal from the Parliamentarian, Tim Reaburn. Tim said this would be a General Council matter and would not be addressed until 2021. He noted that the regional council could not modify or change the proposal, so the options would be to vote it down, or vote to go to General Council with or without concurrence.

Moved by: Kate Crawford

Seconded by: Lynn Hamilton

That Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council agrees with Huron Shores proposal.

CARRIED

[16 Opposed]

Abstentions – Jenny Stephens, Judy Zarubick, Gerry Hofstetter, Liz Dillman, Emily Perry

[Note: The Huron Shores United Church proposal appears as Attachment #1.]

5. **Closing Motion**

Moved by: Rod Coates

Seconded by: Elise Feltrin

That the responsibilities and authority of Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council be entrusted to its Executive in accordance with the Manual 2019 of The United Church of Canada.

CARRIED

6. **Thanks**

President Gary Clark gave thanks for Chair Laurie O’Leary, Secretary Rod Coates, & Parliamentarian Tim Reaburn, for their work.

Today’s agenda having been completed, Laurie O’Leary declared the meeting adjourned at 10:15 AM.

Signature of Chair

Signature of Secretary

Attachment #1

Proposal Concerning Faithful Ministry Personnel

Preamble:

Huron Shores United Church is responding to the closed settlement of 2018 between Reverend Gretta Vosper and Toronto Conference and its impact on The United Church of Canada.

We are concerned that this action has cast a shadow, and raised questions for our wider church, especially relating to the faith of actively serving Ministry Personnel.

Our Council heard the concerns of some members of our congregation and our community. These were referred to a working group to create this proposal, supported by our congregation, community and Council.

This proposal includes our requested course of action by the United Church of Canada in a deliberate and transparent manner.

What is this issue?

- a. A lack of transparency in the settlement process raises questions which extend beyond one individual.
- b. The settlement may have resolved one situation, but leaves the wider question unaddressed: Uncertainty now as to whether Ministry Personnel in the United Church of Canada have a living faith in God.

2. Why is this issue important?

- a. The settlement has raised the question that *some* ministry personnel have left their faith, but are not being open about it, leading to a lack of confidence in public proclamation and testimony.
- b. The wide publicity around the settlement has been framed as an unstated position of the United Church of Canada, which appears to permit “atheist clergy.”
- c. Partner churches within the World Council of Churches, and other ecumenical bodies need assurance that the United Church of Canada has faith in God, honours scripture, and properly administers the sacraments.

3. How might Council respond to this issue?

- a. HSUC Council accept the following proposal and transmit it to WOW Regional Council with concurrence:

HSUC Council proposes that General Council clarify expectations regarding the faith of Ministry Personnel, and develop procedures to provide a mechanism to review the faith of Ministry Personnel.

Attachment #1

- b.* Inform the HSUC congregation of this action, in a deliberate and transparent manner.

4. For the Body transmitting the proposal.

- a.* We request that Regional Council transmit this proposal to General Council Executive with concurrence.
- b.* We request that Regional Council share this proposal with other Regional Councils.

Note: Our minister, The Rev. Dr. Kate Crawford, assisted us in preparing this material; however, she did not initiate, direct or influence our conversations. She resourced us by explaining and clarifying process.

Approved at Council meeting, April 18, 2019