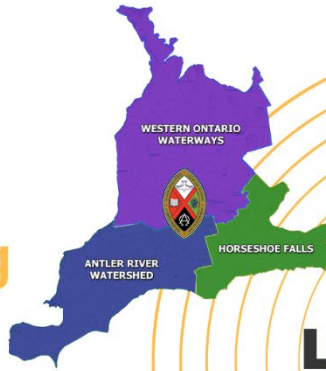


Spring 2024 Tri-Regional Council Meeting



*Antler River Watershed, Horseshoe Falls,
Western Ontario Waterways Regional Councils*

LIFE TOGETHER

When: May 24 - May 26

In-person:

Unifor Family Education Centre,
115 Shipley Ave, Port Elgin,
N0H 2C5

Online via Zoom

Theme Speaker:

The Right Rev.
Dr. Carmen Lansdowne
UCC Moderator



Tri-Regional Council Spring Meeting 2024

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council

WORKBOOK

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Welcome Information

Welcome all in-person registrants to our Tri-Regional Council Meeting, May 24-26, 2024.

The Hospitality Team has been working tirelessly to make sure everything is in place to help you navigate the venue. **Please take a moment to look at the interior map (below) of UNIFOR to familiarize yourself with the space** (UNIFOR Family Education Centre, 115 Shipley Ave, Port Elgin).

Arrival at UNIFOR

The Hospitality Team will be onsite to welcome you! All volunteers will be wearing rainbow t-shirts for easy identification, as well as orange vests when stationed at outside entrances.

**2 volunteers will be stationed at the most westerly entrance to the upper parking lot.
1 volunteer will be at the UNIFOR front desk entrance.**

Signage

There will be **2 signs** on UNIFOR property indicating that the United Church of Canada meeting parking is accessed at either entrance to the upper parking lot.

There will be a **3rd sign** at the UNIFOR front desk.

There will be signage throughout the facility as well.

Assistance

If you have accessibility needs, including requiring porter services, please contact Sue Duliban sduliban@united-church.ca or Michele Petick mpetick@united-church.ca. They will provide you with the cell number for a Hospitality Team member.

If you find you need assistance when you arrive at UNIFOR, our volunteers will be there to help.

Registration

Registration is open at 1 PM on Friday. Please proceed to Assembly Hall once you are in the building. **DO NOT** go to the front desk first. The Hospitality Team volunteers will be taking groups of registrants to the registration desk, to help with traffic flow and ease any potential bottlenecks. You can leave your luggage in Assembly Hall while you register.

If you are staying at UNIFOR: Checkout is 10 AM.

Remember: ALL in person registrants need to register; even if staying onsite. You can pick up a lanyard for your Regional Council in Assembly Hall (if you have a lanyard from a previous meeting, please remember to bring it along!). You will be given a nametag and meal ticket when you register.

Where are we gathering?

Plenary, Celebration of Ministries Service: Assembly Hall
Antler River Watershed RC: Sisterhood Room
Horseshoe Falls RC: Bob White Boardroom
Western Ontario Waterways RC: Anishinaabe Meeting Room
Children's Program: Youth Workers Salon
Youth Program: Abilities Salon
Bookroom: in the Alcohol Free Café

Celebration of Ministries Service, 2:30 PM, Saturday May 25th

The service starts at 2:30 PM on Saturday, May 25th. Volunteers will be available to provide direction to guests to and from the Service. Volunteers will not be available while the Service is in progress.

Notes

Meals will be served cafeteria style by the catering staff. Meals can be eaten in the dining room, Assembly Hall, on the deck (if open) and in Union Station, NOT in bedrooms. If you do eat outside of the dining room, please remember to take your used plate, cutlery, etc., back to the dining room.

Union Station bar will be open at 8:30 PM on Friday and Saturday nights.

Please bring your own writing implement(s), paper, if desired. You may bring a refillable water bottle if you wish.

For those participating online

Each Regional Council will have a Zoom community host. If you have questions/comments during the meeting, or are feeling disconnected from the community, please check in with your Zoom community host so they can assist you.

**COVID 19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY VIRUSES (COLD, FLU, AND/OR RSV)
UNIFOR POLICY**

If you are feeling sick or unwell, please do not come to the Centre. If you start to feel sick or unwell while at the Centre, notify the Front Desk. Please stay in your room and arrangements will be made for you to return home. If you need further guidance on the severity of your symptoms. Complete the self-assessment tool located at <https://www.ontario.ca/self-assessment/> and follow their guidelines.



President's Message

Greetings!

Welcome to this special tri-regional spring meeting of the regional councils of Western Ontario Waterways, Antler River Watershed and Horseshoe Falls. It seems very fitting to me that we would be gathering our regional councils together in this special meeting as we celebrate "Life Together" with our Moderator, the Right Reverend Dr. Carmen Lansdowne as our theme speaker.

I just finished listening to the little book "Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, that inspired the theme of our spring meeting. This book speaks of how we are to be in relationship with one another as followers of Christ and children of God. In it, Bonhoeffer recognizes the many challenges that arise in our common life together while lifting up the gifts when we are able to truly love one another. I look forward to hear the wisdom and insight our moderator will share with us from her reading.

Throughout my first year as President of the WOWRC, the importance of our connections with one another in sustaining and supporting us in all our living has become clearer to me than ever. Having a loving community around us that shares with us in both our grieving and our rejoicing is a blessing and a wonder to behold. We are blessed with a strong executive and faithful commissions and volunteers who work hard to keep us knit together in love and friendship.

Thank you to all who were able to respond to the call to cluster together with neighbouring churches, making and strengthening connections beyond your own community of faith. There is so much that we can do together that we cannot do alone but even more that we might be able to do alone but we know is better for our loving partnerships.

As we head into this Centennial year as the United Church of Canada, what we have been and can be when we are truly "united" will be lifted up and celebrated. For that I give thanks.

May our time together in this spring meeting encourage us as we draw the circle wide, encompassing each one, great and small, just as we are, in this life together where "we are one".

In loving partnership,

Jennifer Irving, President, WOWRC

AGENDA

Friday May 24: Plenary

2 PM: Welcome

Worship/Covenanting with Executive Minister

Speakers

- Tanya Cameron, Vocational Minister/Tim Hackborn, Office of Vocation Minister - Indigenous Church
- Brenna Baker, Community of Faith Stewardship Support
- Greg Smith-Young, Growth Animator

Introduction of DLMS

Speakers

- Kindred Works
- Tim Hackborn, Martha Pedoniquotte, Community Capacity Development Coordinator (CCDC) – Indigenous Ministries & Justice Unit, Micol Cottrell, Minister Pastoral Relations, Lynne Allin, ARW/HF Minister Congregational Support, John Neff, WOW Minister Congregational Support

5:30-7:30 PM: Dinner

7:30 PM: The Moderator

8:30 PM: Vespers

Saturday May 25

7:30-9 AM: Breakfast

9 AM: Regional Council

Proposal 1 Opening and Procedural Motion

BRAVE/Affirming Statement

Welcome to those new to the regional council/regional council meeting

Proposal 2 GC45 Commissioners Slate

Proposal 3 GC45 Proposal

10:30 AM: Break

10:50 AM: Plenary

Worship

Introduction of Candidates and Candidates Address the Court

11:20 AM: Plenary

The Moderator and Presentation of Gift to the Moderator

NOON- 2 PM: Lunch (Celebration of Ministries Service rehearsal for those involved Noon-12:30

PM/Choir practice for those involved 1 PM)

2:00 PM: Deadline for New Business

2:30 PM: Celebration of Ministries Service

Possible free time following service

5:30-7:30 PM: Dinner

7:30 PM: Regional Council

- President Elect Nominees speeches
- Proposal 4 Executive/Commissions Slate
- Order of the day: Visit from the Moderator

Sunday May 26

7:30-9 AM: Breakfast

9-10:00 AM: Regional Council

- Election of President Elect
- Regional Council Evaluation: Update on regional council follow-up
- New & Unfinished Business
- Proposal 5 Closing Motion

10:00 AM: Break

10:15 AM: Plenary

Worship, honouring In Memoriam, Community of Faith Life Cycle changes, Retirees, Jubilands

Message: Rev. Mark Laird

Noon-12:30 PM: Closing, pick up bagged lunch

PROPOSAL #1

Title: Opening and Procedural Motion

Origin: Executive Minister

What is the issue?

The regional council must establish the procedures by which it will conduct business.

Why is this issue important?

This clarifies and confirms the way in which decision-making will happen.

How might the regional council respond to the issue?

The regional council might adopt the following as a consent docket:

1. Adopt the agenda as circulated and authorize the Agenda and Business Committee to make any changes as necessary;
2. Approve the minutes of the meeting of September 28-October 1, 2023;
3. Receive the following minutes of the following meetings of the

i.Executive

24-04-17

24-03-20

24-02-21

24-01-17

24-01-13

23-12-06

23-11-15

23-10-18

23-09-19

ii.Congregational Support Commission

24-04-11

24-03-21

24-03-14

24-02-08

24-01-11

23-11-09

23-10-16

23-09-19

iii.Human Resources Commission

23-10-17

23-09-19

23-07-18

23-06-20

iv.Discipleship and Justice Commission

23-09-19

for information.

Note: Minutes are posted on the website <https://wowrucucc.ca/meeting-minutes/>

4. Confirm the appointment of Colin Snyder to the Congregational Support Commission;
5. Confirm the appointment of Sharon Norton to the Congregational Support Commission;

6. Confirm the appointment of Peter Kupfer to the Congregational Support Commission;
7. Confirm the appointment of Kate Ballagh-Steeper to the Discipleship and Justice Commission;
8. Confirm the appointment of Wonder Chimvinga to the Executive;
9. Appoint Fred Monteith as Parliamentarian;
10. Appoint Terry Smith as Chair, Agenda and Business Committee;
11. Name Maggie Dieter to serve as Equity Support Team Member;
12. Name President Jennifer Irving, Chair Agenda and Business Committee Terry Smith, Recording Secretary Beth Kerr, and Parliamentarian Fred Monteith, as the Agenda and Business Committee;
13. Name the Chair Agenda and Business Committee and Recording Secretary as scrutineers;
14. Set the bounds of the meeting as the zoom call and the UNIFOR Family Education Centre, Port Elgin, Ontario;
15. Make the designated representative from any United Church ministry, other than a congregation, which has been invited to become a community of faith by entering into a covenant with the regional council, a member of the regional council for this meeting (Section C.1.2 c);
16. Make all guests corresponding members;
17. Set the deadline for new business to be submitted to the Agenda and Business Committee as of 2:00 p.m., Saturday, May 25, 2024;
18. Receive all written reports in the workbook;
19. Adopt the following method for dealing with proposals for action by the regional council
Step One:

The Presenter will outline:

- A) What is the issue? and
- B) The suggested way in which the regional council might respond to the issue.

Step Two:

The President will inquire if there are questions for clarification. Please note this is for clarification only.

Step Three:

The President will then ask if there are changes or additions being suggested for the proposal. Using warm and cool signals, the regional council will seek to come closer to agreement on how to respond to the issue.

Step Four:

Once there is significant agreement, the President will invite the Presenter to move the motion at which point the regional council enters the formal debate process.

BRAVE: Commitment to Community Safety

We strive, in this time of co-learning, to be brave by:

- B – bring accountable for the impact of both our words and our silence
- R – reflecting on and naming our own biases
- A – actively listening
- V – vocalizing questions that arise from our learning
- E – encountering new ideas with curiosity and wonder

ARW, HF, WOW Regional Councils Affirming Ministries Vision Statement SAFETY. SANCTUARY. UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Striving to be faithful followers of Jesus in our time and place, Antler River Watershed / Horseshoe Falls / Western Ontario Waterways Regional Councils 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 any sexual orientation and gender identity, and all others who are marginalized.

The Regional Council, Staff, Executive, Commissions, networks, and members commit to working toward fulfilling the vision statement by:

- A. Continuing to remove barriers to participation in the life and work of Antler River Watershed/Horseshoe Falls/Western Ontario Waterways Regional Councils.
- B. Continuing to remove barriers to participation in society.
- C. Committing to be open to the Spirit.
- D. Resisting oppression.
- E. Welcoming and celebrating people of any sexual orientation and gender identity.

Designated Lay Ministers

Previously been recognized as Designated Lay Ministers that have met the requirements of our church to enter the order of ministry

Antler River Watershed Regional Council

Marilyn Arthur DM
Pat Morrison OM
Michael Shewburg OM
Eric Skillings OM
Pam Wilcox OM
Karen Willis OM

Horseshoe Falls Regional Council

Jen Auger DM
Dawn Ballantyne OM
Kim Belanger DM
Sue Cowan OM
Barbara Creelman OM
Maureen Ellison OM
Wendy Lowden OM
Carolyn Smith OM
Diane Viney OM

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council

Doug Brown OM
Andrew Hyde OM
Marianne Leach Hoffer OM
Paul Vollick DM
Judy Zarubick OM

Candidates

Antler River Watershed Regional Council

Dan Leaver, Commissionand

Horseshoe Falls Regional Council

Jeff Learmonth, Ordinand

Carolin MacMillan, Ordinand

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council

John Adeyemi, Ordinand

PROPOSAL #2

Title: WOWRC GC45 Commissioners Slate

Originating Body: Recruitment Team

Recruitment Information

WOWRC Recruitment Team of Rebekah Duncan, Jennifer Irving and Heather Leffler would like to thank all our faithful volunteers and staff of WOWRC and especially those who put their names forward to serve on our Executive, Commissions, as Pastoral Charge Supervisors and Liaisons and as General Council Commissioners.

When it came time to discern a slate of volunteers for our Executive and Commissions, and General Council 45, President Jennifer step aside due to a conflict of interest. We invited Bruce Gregersen (MP), Andrew Hyde (MP), Michiko Bown-Kai (MP), Marg Krauter (L) and Greta Horton (L) to discern with Heather and Rebekah. The discernment group affirmed the Team's proposed slate for the Executive and Commissions for 2024-2025.

What is the issue?

The 45th General Council will meet in Calgary in July 2025 and the regional council has the opportunity to elect a slate of Commissioners to attend and represent the regional council.

Why is this important?

The decisions of the General Council impact all communities of faith and ministry personnel. It is important the Commissioners be people of vision and commitment who can bring diverse perspectives to lead to bold and daring decisions (to borrow from the Call of the Strategic Plan).

What might the regional council do?

The regional council might agree to:

1. Approve the slate prepared by the Recruitment Team as presented:

Ministry Personnel

Wonder Chimvinga

Whitton Daley

Alexander Jebson

Neil Parker

Roz Vincent-Haven

Judy Zarubick

Ann Harbridge: First Alternate

Jennifer Irving: Second Alternate

Linda Roberts: Third Alternate

Lay

Dawn Blanchard

Mark Breathwaite

Karen Cartmell

Brent Caslick

Christine Grose

Neelah Irving

Douglas Hayward: First Alternate

Carol Leibold: Second Alternate

Penny Squirrell: Third Alternate

2. Empower the WOWRC Executive to name one Youth or Young Adult (aged 30 or under) Alternate to General Council 45 who would serve if either of our two Youth or Young Adult commissioners is not able to attend.
3. Encourage the Recruitment Team to gather diverse voices to discern slates for Regional Council Meetings and General Council Commissioners.

PROPOSAL #3

A proposal to allow adherents to be elected to Governing Bodies of Communities of Faith in the United Church of Canada.

Origin: Glen Morris United Church, Official Board

1. What is the issue? Why is it important?

Glen Morris United Church and likely other small churches have difficulty filling all positions on their Governing Bodies due to the limited number of full members in their congregations. Many adherents are faithful and devout Christians who possess skills and resources to become invaluable members of Governing Bodies. They are willing to be nominated and elected to Governing Bodies to contribute to the life of work of their churches. This is an important issue since it very likely affects United Churches throughout Canada.

2. What is happening now?

The Manual of the United Church of Canada (Bylaw B7.3.1) restricts (lay) membership on Governing Bodies to full members, with one exception – if Regional Council grants approval of an exception based on “special circumstances”. The Manual does not provide a reason for this restriction on adherents; it does not give any definition of “special circumstances”; and it does not clarify the “exception” granting process.

3. What is the recommendation?

It is the recommendation of the Official Board of Glen Morris United Church that General Council revise The Manual Bylaw B7.3.1. as follows:

B7.3.1. General

The Governing Body has the following members:

- A The full members and adherents of the congregation elected by the congregation or pastoral charge;
- B Unchanged
- C Unchanged
- D Unchanged
- E Unchanged

EXCEPTION CLAUSE - Delete

4. Background information:

Glen Morris is a true community church. Our 2023 Membership Roll lists 72 resident full members and 35 adherents, so adherents represent 33% of our congregation. Being the only place of worship in the Village of Glen Morris, the church has attracted a congregation that hails from various religious and denominational backgrounds. Our congregation includes Anglicans, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and probably others who, understandably have not become full members. People have their own reasons for not wishing to be full members, which we should not question. Consequently, we have a disproportionate number of faithful, supportive and deeply involved adherents who willingly give of their time and talent to advance the interests of our pastoral charge. This extends to their commitment to the spiritual life of the church, as evidenced by their participation in publicly reciting various affirmations of faith or creeds during church services. In addition to this, there is the option of having a covenanting service with all elected officials so that there is a sense of dedication to the community of faith for all people serving (regardless of their membership status).

To deny adherents a formal place on our Official Board is antithetical to the full potential of our Governing Body. This situation is all the more problematic since (like other churches), we have a small number of resident full members (72). Some of those members do not take any part in the life and work of the church, so they are not considered candidates for nomination to the Official Board. Our church has 35 supporting adherents, some of whom are similarly inactive in their attendance and contribution to the church, so they would not be considered candidates for nomination either.

We take reassurance from the following principle in the Preamble to The Manual: *“The Manual must strike a balance between enough regulation for the United Church to function in a fair and orderly way, and enough flexibility so that courts/councils and people are free to carry out ministry in ways, both traditional and innovative, that meet local needs”*. The Preamble goes on to elaborate on this principle as follows: *“The United Church exists in a wide variety of contexts. There have always been challenges in setting policies and procedures for ministry settings that may be urban, rural, large, small, and that differ in the strength of their human and financial resources. The focus in The Manual is on broad policy statements rather than specific provisions for every conceivable situation because ... this invites people to think for themselves by acting in the spirit of the policies with good will and common sense to achieve a just result in a particular situation”*.

5. How does this proposal help us to live into our church’s commitments on equity?

This proposal creates opportunities for people to discern their faith journeys by experiencing the fullness of the life and work of the church which can be particularly meaningful for people who are either newcomers to Canada and still learning about the denomination; for those who have left other churches; and for those who are healing wounds related to religious-based trauma.

It is also possible that more Indigenous People, members of minority groups, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and people with disabilities will be nominated for membership on Governing Bodies if the larger pool of candidates includes both adherents and full members.

For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council:

Please select the appropriate option and provide the key discussion points for items being forwarded to the General Council:

- Agree
- Disagree without forwarding to the General Council
- Disagree and forwarding to the General Council
- Take no action at this time

Comments _____

Who will present (by pre-recorded video) this proposal on behalf of the transmitting body?

Email contact:

If you have questions regarding this proposal, please send them to: GC45@united-church.ca

President Elect Nominee

Introduction of President Elect Candidate: Rebekah Duncan (OM)

Hello, my name is Rebekah Duncan. I am a Massage Therapist (2002), a Mother (2005 and 2008), a Minister (2020), and a Scouter (Beavers, Cubs and Scouts - 2013) among other things. I have an undergraduate degree in Drama from Mount Allison University (98) and I am currently finishing up my Master's in Theology and Religious Studies at the Atlantic School of Theology where I also earned my MDiv in 2020.

After taking a few years to get my feet under me after ordination in the fall of 2020, I have worked to become active in the regional council. I was part of the worship team for both regional council meetings in 2023 and currently I sit on the Recruitment Team and the Congregational Support Commission. I have been involved in the United Church my whole life and have participated in several general councils as a youth and an adult.

While I have a strong call to rural pastoral ministry, currently serving three pastoral charges in the Western Ontario Waterways, I have also always felt a clear call to be active in the regional and possibly even the national church. I believe that we need to take an active role in this, our church, if there is to be a future for this church. I am excited by the possibilities. It is with careful discernment with valued colleagues and mentors that I prayerfully submit my name to be considered for the role of President Elect of Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council.



PROPOSAL #4

Title: WOWRC Executive/Commissions Slate

Originating Body: Recruitment Team

Recruitment Information

WOWRC Recruitment Team of Rebekah Duncan, Jennifer Irving and Heather Leffler would like to thank all our faithful volunteers and staff of WOWRC and especially those who put their names forward to serve on our Executive, Commissions, as Pastoral Charge Supervisors and Liaisons and as General Council Commissioners.

We are also grateful to all the volunteers who led and attended cluster gatherings. We will continue to pass on feedback we have received and look forward to hearing of the clusters who have chosen to meet again.

When it came time to discern a slate of volunteers for our Executive and Commissions, and General Council 45, President Jennifer step aside due to a conflict of interest. We invited Bruce Gregersen (MP), Andrew Hyde (MP), Michiko Bown-Kai (MP), Marg Krauter (L) and Greta Horton (L) to discern with Heather and Rebekah. The discernment group affirmed the Team's proposed slate for the Executive and Commissions for 2024-2025.

On behalf of the Recruitment Team

Thank you to those completing terms/resigning

Executive

Mark Laird DM (24) past president

Andrea Allan OM (26) 2nd term

Jessica Cottrell OM (24) 2nd term

Wonder Chimvinga OM (27)

Congregational Support Commission

Judy Chalmers (24) 2nd term

Mission and Discipleship

Mary Hawthorne (24) 2nd term

Joyce Osborne (24) 2nd term

What is the issue?

The regional council can best fulfill its decision-making responsibilities if it has a full slate of diverse members in decision-making roles.

What might the regional council do?

The regional council might agree to:

Approve the slate prepared by the Recruitment Team as presented:

Executive/Commissions Slate

Executive	
Secretary	Dawn Blanchard L (27)
Discipleship & Justice Commission	John Adeyemi OM (27)
	Diane Dick L (27)
	Kristal McGee OM (27)
Human Resources Commission	Lena Medeiros OM (27)
	James Montgomery L (27)
	Cait Stewart L (27)

PROPOSAL #5

Title: Closing Motion

Origin: Executive Minister

What is the issue?

The work of the regional council continues between regional council meetings.

Why is this issue important?

The regional council must be clear how the work will continue.

What might the regional council do?

The regional council might

1. Entrust any unfinished business from its May 24, May 25 and May 26, 2024 meeting to the Executive;
2. Authorize the Executive to fill any vacancies on the understanding that appointments will be confirmed at the next spring regional council meeting;
3. Direct the Executive to plan to convene a meeting of the regional council in the fall of 2024; and
4. Entrust the Executive and Commissions with the responsibilities and authority of Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council in accordance with *The Manual* of The United Church of Canada and the Governance Handbook of the Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council.
5. Close the May 24, May 25, and May 26, 2024 meeting of the Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council at the close of the worship service on Sunday, May 26, 2024.

Staff Support Committee

The Staff Support Committee acts as a resource for the Executive Minister in discussions of staff complement, recruitment, oversight and development. It serves as the caring presence of the Regional Councils with their staff.

Acting as a resource, the Staff Support Committee meets with the Executive Minister regularly to review position descriptions, staff changes, staff development and team building. The Committee also tries to serve as a caring presence for the Regional Councils. It assists the Executive Minister with recognizing individual staff at particular milestones. The Staff Support Committee engages individual staff by serving as a liaison and if desired, accompaniment to performance reviews.

This year we are celebrating the five-year ministry milestones with the Regional Council of

Kevin Steeper, ARW/HF/WOW Pastoral Support Minister

Kathy Douglas, ARW/HF/WOW Minister, Faith Formation

Lynne Allin, ARW/HF Minister, Congregational Support

We are grateful for their service and the gifts they share generously with the Church.

Community of Faith Life Cycle Changes

Antler River Watershed Regional Council

With thanks for their legacy and faithful service

Disbanded Congregations

Belle River United Church, disbanding spring 2024 with final worship service October 29, 2023.

Many blessings as these communities of faith continue their ministries together

Amalgamations and Name Changes

Bryanston United Church and Villages United Church, Granton amalgamated to form Villages United Church.

Central United Church and Emmanuel United Church amalgamated to form Emmanuel United Church, Windsor.

Kerwood-Bethesda United Church and Strathroy United Church amalgamated to form Strathroy United Church.

Parkhill United Church and Thedford United Church amalgamated to form Ausable United Church.

Zion United Church and Thorndale United Church amalgamated to form Thorndale United Church.

Nesting

Wesley United Church, now nesting with Charing Cross United Church.

Fletcher United Church, now nesting with Merlin United Church.

Horseshoe Falls Regional Council

With thanks for their legacy and faithful service

Disbanded Congregations

Trinity United Church, Thorold

Elcho United Church, Wellandport

People's Memorial United Church, Ridgeway

Mount Carmel United Church

Many blessings as these communities of faith continue their ministries together

Amalgamation

Binkley United Church, Dundas and St. Mark's United Church, Dundas

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council

With thanks for their legacy and faithful service

Disbanded Congregations

Goldstone United Church

Oliphant United Church

Amalgamations and Name Changes

Many blessings as these communities of faith continue their ministries together

Shelburne Primrose Pastoral Charge; Trinity United Church, Shelburne and Primrose United Church to Shelburne Primrose Pastoral Charge; Trinity Primrose United Church

Angus United Church with Grenfel United Church. Now Grenfel United Church.

Parkview United Church, Stratford with Avondale United Church, Stratford. New name Avondale United Church, Stratford.

Walters Falls Pastoral Charge to Temple Hill Pastoral Charge; Temple Hill United Church

In Memoriam

Antler River Watershed Regional Council

Ruth Butt OM
Lewis Snow OM
Colin Swan OM
D. Graham Tipple OM

Horseshoe Falls Regional Council

Nora Fueten OM
Meg Grieve OM
William "Bill" Thorneloe OM
Frank Walker OM

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council

Barbara Curzon DM
Joyce Johnston OM
George Albert Baker 'Ab' Moore OM
Helen Prior OM
Timothy Reaburn OM
Bruce Scott OM

Jubilands

Antler River Watershed Regional Council

50 Years

Derek Parry OM

William Vanderveeken OM

Horseshoe Falls Regional Council

50 Years

John Allsop OM

D. Paul Crittenden OM

Kenneth MacDonald OM

Jeff Maissan OM

Wayne Myhre OM

55 Years

David Iverson OM

W. Robert Johnstone OM

J. Ross Routliffe OM

60 Years

W. Leslie McSpadden OM

Ronald Wallace OM

75 Years

Ward Kaiser OM

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council

50 Years

Elizabeth Eberhart-Moffat OM

Peter Moffat OM

Paul Ross OM

60 Years

David Burns OM

John Gertridge OM

Kenneth Myers OM

65 Years

Joan Gugeler DM

Morley Hammond OM

Paul Webb OM

70 Years

Robert Clyde OM

Retirees

Antler River Watershed Regional Council

Mary Dillon DLM
John Lovering OM
Sheila Macgregor OM
Brenda MacMain DLM

Horseshoe Falls Regional Council

Laura Borgerson OM
Cathy Dilts OM
Brian Donst OM
Maureen Ellison DLM
Debra McGill OM
Kim Shantz DM
Karen Williams OM

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council

Kate Crawford Mulrooney OM
Ed Laksmanis OM
Gwen Nicol-MacDonald OM
Cathy Paul OM
Joan Tuchlinsky DM

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council

Following Up on the Tri-Regional Evaluation

Below are jpeg images of the data of Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council Following Up on the Tri-Regional Evaluation from the Fall break out room sessions for the Regional Evaluation. Accessible version available online <https://wowrcucc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Spring-2024-WOWRC-Follow-Up-to-Going-Deeper-RC-Evaluation.docx>

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council Following Up on the Tri-Regional Evaluation

Background

When the Regional Councils of Antler River Watershed, Horseshoe Falls and Western Ontario Waterways were formed, the three regional councils decided to work together with shared staffing and a common governance model and committed to evaluating that governance and staffing model after three years. Bill Allen and Jenny Stephens conducted that evaluation for us in 2023. In June 2023, Bill and Jenny reported on their findings to the Tri-Regional Council Executives and Staff.

At our Fall 2023 Western Ontario Waterways meeting, we dedicated significant time to going deeper on some of the focus areas identified in the evaluation. Participants in the Fall Regional Meeting were invited to self-select which breakout group they were most interested in to have a more in-depth conversation about that aspect of our life and work together.

Following that meeting, the notes taken in each group were collated into a document called 'Going Deeper Into the Evaluation'. This document was made available to the Executive and Commissions and Staff and any member of the Regional Council who asked for it.

Since then, we have been working away at some of the ideas and concerns noted in that report. What follows below is a status update on where things are at. We have sorted items into three categories:

1. Response in Progress – This names what we have done or are currently working on to address these areas of feedback.
2. Needs a Response Plan – This identifies areas that are within the scope of the Regional Council's work but for which we have not yet developed a plan to respond, and in some case includes ideas we might try.
3. Parking Lot – This acknowledges that some of the ideas, no matter how brilliant, are outside the scope of the Regional Council's work either because they are the work of another part of the church (denomination or communities of faith) or because they are just too large for us to tackle at this time.

Section 1– Connecting Communities of Faith to the Regional Council

Develop a strategy to be more pro-active in engaging with Communities of Faith and to keep them informed of activities and decisions of the Regional Council

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
What is WOW??	Faith communities in WOW were grouped into 17 clusters to meet and share information about themselves with each other. The leaders who agreed to lead these clusters are active members within the Region and will share information about WOW and the wider United Church during these gatherings. A video was created to share at the gatherings and post to website and social media	Gather information from the individual cluster groups as to what went well or what didn't go so well. Continue to encourage and promote these small cluster gatherings to foster relationships with other nearby Faith Communities.	
Not enough Volunteers / Recruitment	Expressions of Interest forms have been revised and reposted A "Get Involved" tab was placed on the wowrccc.ca website homepage	Small Communities of Faith are more susceptible to this lack of volunteers due to pool of numbers and an ageing population. Consider shorter terms for persons serving in WOWRC roles, so volunteers will not feel they are not trapped into a position that they cannot get out of.	This is an issue across the Church and other Charitable and Community organizations.
		If possible, encourage Volunteers to seek out a younger age "Buddy" to work alongside with them and share the load.	
Reduced Relationship Building time	Currently using breakout rooms/table groups at meetings to build new relationships.	Continue to use open breakout rooms for people to connect.	
		Continue to encourage the new cluster groups to meet and build relationships with each other.	
Limitations of Staff time		Continue to seek ways to communicate the events that are already happening.	This is a budget issue in regards to what the WOW Regional Council can afford.
		Many small Rural Communities of Faith are not computer literate or even have internet so connecting to projects that Staff are promoting will be problematic.	
Intentional Reach out & Communication /Connection	The new development of the 17 Cluster Groups.	Encourage clusters that are within an hour of one another to gather for potluck meal and fellowship.	

Section 2– Communicating with Communities of Faith

Develop a communication strategy to help keep Communities of Faith informed about what is happening in the Region

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
The need for simplicity	Reorganizing of the website for clarity and ease of use is being done by staff with items sent out in emails cross-posted to web-site and Facebook to offer multiple ways to access information All communication being conscious of the request for simplicity of language and length	How to continue educating on use of SharePoint and ChurchHub and help communities of faith access the training that is out there	SharePoint and ChurchHub are necessary for certain pieces of work and will help make things easier if we can get over the learning curve (hopefully?)
Feeling patronized and dismissed	Keeping before us our BRAVE statement: We strive, in this time of co-learning, to be brave by B – bring accountable for the impact of both our words and our silence R – reflecting on and naming our own biases A – actively listening V – vocalizing questions that arise from our learning E – encountering new ideas with curiosity and wonder		
Thinking about the website from the perspective of the end user	Staff continue to work daily to strengthen the website and continue to keep it up to date Who to contact if you have questions that you can't find answers to has been added under staff descriptions	Is it possible to have volunteers from a variety of perspectives who could spend some time using the website and finding places where it can be strengthened to help users—and directing the staff who can then make changes?	Since we can't program the search engine for the website there are just some problems we can't correct
How can on-going feedback about communication be built in?			

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
Providing alternatives to using the website	Wherever possible providing printed copies of website materials when requested	Is there a way we can connect Communities of Faith to a "technology liaison" who can help navigate areas that must be done on computer?	Cost of providing alternative formats can be prohibitive - there are also environmental concerns?
How can on-going feedback about communication be built in?			
Person to person information sharing	Zoom meeting of WOWRC regional reps was held, monthly zoom gatherings of ministry personnel within WOWRC are hosted by Kevin Steeper Cluster gatherings that have been organized help support this person to person information sharing	Organizing future zoom gatherings that can help communication	
ChurchHub is very frustrating and it is difficult to get people to do the work of maintaining it.	ChurchHub videos link is included in information given with search team training. Training videos link has been added to the website. Work is also in process to help pastoral charge supervisors and liaisons to know where training videos are located.	We could offer a training session to help communities of faith navigate ChurchHub.	ChurchHub is a responsibility of the National Church
Meeting Staff helps	Staff are always in attendance at the Tri-Regional Council Meetings		Given the new structure, opportunities for in person meetings where introductions can be made are few

Section 3– Support to Communities of Faith Searching for a New Minister

Exploring ways to use our resources as a Regional Council to support communities in the search process

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
Navigating ChurchHub is very challenging	ChurchHub videos link is information given with search team training. Training videos link has been added to the website. Work is also in process to help pastoral charge supervisors and liaisons to know where training videos are located.	Can we offer Webinars to watch the training videos together and answer questions as they arise?	ChurchHub itself is a responsibility of the National Church
Challenges with paperwork	A summary page of search process created fall 2022.	Continuing to look at what information is available on the website, for example templates and examples.	
	Website was revised to be more user friendly.		
	Template for position description has been revised.		
	Work began last year to connect liaisons as soon a change of pastoral relationship is approved instead of when the search team is formed.		
Challenges with Liaisons	Liaison training in the Spring of 2023 brought on new liaisons. However, there is still a shortage. The last two years have seen a higher number of churches undergoing search.	Creating liaison gatherings to better equip liaisons.	
Length of Training Videos	Search Team Training is not a video but done by liaisons or monthly by the Pastoral Relations Minister. Video offered to members who were not able to be present. There is a lot of information that must be included in the training.	Encouraging and equipping the liaisons to do the training regularly again for a more personalized training.	ChurchHub videos are produced by the National Church
More user-friendly website	Revisions have happened with focus being on organizing information from the community of faith's perspective.		

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
Finding Supply	Pulpit supply list now done through ChurchHub (so ministers can update) with copy available through PRM. Short-term supply done through search process.	Working towards giving lists for pulpit supply to liaisons and pastoral charge supervisors. Also looking at password protected website. Put information on Short-term supply on website.	
Recruiting lay people as liaisons and pastoral charge supervisors	At search team training, people are encouraged to consider serving as liaisons. Educational time at Regional council meetings has happened to let people know that lay people can serve in these roles and what's involved.		
Education about alternatives	Connections made to the Office of Vocation Minister about Supervised Ministry Education sites to help with discernment.	Information could be added to the website and education of liaisons.	

Section 4 – Facilitate networking among area communities of faith

Explore more deeply what the communities of faith believe they are missing under the regional council system and endeavour to address.

*Comment from the group discussing this section: "We need to take responsibility for this and figure out ways in our own areas and share names. This should be at the grass roots level." * May it be so.*

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
Historical relationships and cooperation were disrupted due to structural change and COVID	17 clusters were organized for a one-time gathering that would introduce neighbouring communities of faith to each other and WOWRC and give them an opportunity to feedback to the Executive. Two gatherings had to be cancelled due to limited response despite the facilitator's efforts. A significant challenge is that there are so many churches without ministers.	Our committees and commissions need access to better contact information to connect and support ministers and communities of faith. The Recruitment Committee is considering compiling a directory for the WOWRC.	
Clusters of ministry personnel across WOWRC meet regularly but churches without ministers are not included.		Discern whether these are gatherings to connect and support ministry personnel or to connect communities of faith. Clusters could be asked to consider including lay reps from congregations without ministers if the latter is the case. Lay regional reps could be encouraged to create their own clusters.	

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
People no longer know each other	Break out rooms/table groups at meetings are helping to build new relationships.	At online meetings we could keep open breakout rooms for people to connect at lunch, after meeting. A volunteer host could be responsible for ending the meeting instead of taking up staff time	
Shared activities – Are there ways to include smaller churches in areas surrounding urban centres? Are there possibilities for shared confirmation classes? bible studies?	WOWRC Staff offer webinars on topics such as pastoral care, affirming ministries, children/youth ministry and more. These webinars give people opportunities to meet and share ideas with communities of faith with similar interests. Webinar information is shared via the newsletter and Facebook.	Continue to seek ways to communicate the events that are already happening, keeping in mind that some people don't use Facebook.	Communities of faith may wish to connect and organize shared confirmation, Bible Study etc.
		Continue Michele Petick's (Admin. Assistant for Social Media and Website Management) good work on the website to help people connect.	
		Perhaps a volunteer could edit Kathy Douglas' (Minister Faith Formation) pastoral care workshops and others to lift out highlights that could be posted on WOWRC YouTube to inspire others.	
How can we learn about upcoming events in nearby churches?	Inviting the posting of events and special worships to Facebook	We could have a volunteer group gather and prioritize/curate announcements to work with administrative staff to use staff time effectively.	
Perception many small churches with no connection to technology		If we have no email contact with a church (ie. minister, church email, regional rep), we could partner them with a neighbouring community of faith to receive information.	
		We could offer a training session to help communities of faith navigate Church Hub.	
Compile a database?		- A group of clergy has drawn together a number of pastoral charges to compile what strengths each has and is hoping to build a database with this information. -The Recruitment Team is working on the feasibility of creating some kind of WOWRC Directory	Some folk are doing this and it works great! This would take a huge amount of time and energy and be out of date before it was completed on a Regional level.

Section 5 – Enhancing “health, joy, excellence in ministry practice”

How can the Region support and enhance ministry practice?

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
Gathering clergy for mutual support	<p>Kevin Steeper (Pastoral Support Minister) organizes regular Zoom meetings for paid accountable ministers for mutual support. These are advertised regularly in the WOW newsletter, on social media and via email. They are open to all people serving in paid accountable ministry.</p> <p>An annual in-person luncheon has been organized for ministry personnel for the past two years.</p> <p>There are other clergy groups meeting in person or online in various parts of our Region. Where possible, Micol Cottrell (Pastoral Relations Minister) has been letting neighbouring ministers know when new ministry personnel arrive in an area</p>	Are there further ways in which we could help clergy know who is near them and encourage the formation of supportive clergy clusters?	It is not within the scope of the Regional Council to organize new clergy clusters but the continued development of these opportunities for connection is encouraged.
Pastoral Care for Clergy who are going through rough moments in ministry	<p>Kevin Steeper is available for support to ministry personnel for a wide variety of needs.</p> <p>A recent feature in the WOW newsletter highlighted places where support is available for clergy both through the denomination, through the region and through our benefits plan.</p>		Concern was expressed about the changes to the role cost-of-living increases would be determined in the future (which had just been announced when the WOW Regional Council met). This is a denominational issue and outside the scope of the Region Council’s work.
Spiritual Practices		More encouragement to congregations to be supportive of sabbaticals- Could we print some sabbatical stories in the newsletter? Could a toolkit be prepared for congregations and ministers about the steps to take when planning a sabbatical?	Much of this is a personal responsibility for clergy to ensure they are taking their own spiritual care seriously.
Hospitality and Connection	Some folks found it difficult to navigate the Unifor site so a hospitality committee has been organized for the up-coming Tri-Region meeting in May.	Is it possible for the Region to have a list of who is serving where that can be distributed at the Spring meeting?	

Section 6 – Connecting with Retired Ministry Personnel

How can the Region continue to support and celebrate our Retired ministers?

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
Connecting with the church	Kevin Steeper (Pastoral Support Minister) invited retired clergy to attend the regional clergy gatherings. (Feb 7 th in Mount Forest)	A review of the Pulpit supply list shows some retired clergy on the list. Perhaps an invitation to others to have their name added. (who should issue this invitation? supply list is responsibility of HR commission)	
	Retired Clergy are invited to join the monthly online clergy gatherings		
Honouring/Valuing	A policy change to permit retired DLMs (Designated Lay Ministers) to be VAMs (Voluntary Associate Ministers) passed at fall WOWRC meeting.	Ensure retired DLMs have access to the opportunity for commissioning or ordination by permitting short term appointments (perhaps supply appointments)	Do we have the budget to hold a retirement dinner for retiring clergy and perhaps their spouses. (this used to happen in Toronto Conference)
	Retirees are recognized at a Regional meeting and this has been moved to the Spring In-Person meeting now that we are back in person. Some chose not to respond to invitation to be recognized.	Some presbyteries used to have a retired clergy who would take responsibility for connecting with other retirees. Could Volunteer Recruitment seek such a volunteer?	
Pragmatics – re-develop closed church properties for retired UC clergy			This is outside the scope of the Regional Council

Section 7 – Supporting Justice Work in Communities of Faith

How might we best communicate opportunities for Communities of Faith to connect with, support, and be transformed by local justice initiatives throughout our region?

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
Communities of Faith are unfamiliar with the various justice networks that exist across our region, and reliant on regional staff to help them connect.	The Remit 1 "Reach-Out" work orchestrated by the Discipleship and Justice Commission (D&J) was very successful in communicating the importance of an urgent and actionable initiative. D&J is discerning what wisdom from this initiative is applicable in other situations. Individualized communication seems effective, but requires a lot of time, coordination, and energy.	Explore how to better utilize WOWRC communications (website, newsletter, social media, etc.) to inform communities of faith about justice networks within and around the UCC.	
		D&J needs to determine (alongside regional staff) how to keep this ever-changing information current and up-to-date.	
	D&J Commission members are learning about the various partners in our region. D&J has begun inviting a different guest- (from various justice networks, discipleship partners, and M&S Fund recipients) to report at each monthly meeting. The sheer number of groups to connect with is a challenge, but D&J is trying to make those connections.	D&J needs to determine how wide an array of justice partners to promote/amplify. Only UCC affiliated? Ecumenical? Multifaith? Secular? Without some prioritizing and narrowing of scope, regional communication becomes ineffective.	
Communities of faith are unfamiliar with the justice work being done at neighbouring communities of faith. Knowing what other UCCs are doing is valuable in terms of inspiration and facilitating possible partnerships.	The Remit 1 "Reach-Out" has shown us how incomplete our records are of every Communities of Faith's contact information. Work is being done to update and disseminate this information so Communities of Faith can connect.	We should be able to better utilize WOWRC communications (website, newsletter, social media, etc.) to inform Communities of Faith about initiatives of neighbouring Communities of Faith.	D&J and regional staff can amplify the stories of Community of Faith initiatives, but the storytelling needs to come from Communities of Faith themselves. There are limited resources to seek out stories.
	Cluster groups are a helpful tool for information sharing. Communities of faith are encouraged to connect with these groupings for the purposes of information sharing.	It may be unfeasible to maintain a comprehensive and up-to-date list of each Community of Faith's initiatives, but D&J and/or regional staff should be able to highlight select/varied projects with consistency and regularity.	

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
Communities of Faith need collaborative initiatives that highlight justice and discipleship for youth. Previous youth programs at Conference or Presbytery level no longer exists.	<p>D&J has granted M&S (Mission and Service) funds to “The HUB” youth and young adult network in recent years. Linked with Trinity United (Kitchener-Waterloo), the HUB offers regional and collaborative youth programs that focus on Jesus, Justice and Inclusion, all across southern Ontario. Find out more at https://www.trinityunitedkw.ca/about-the-hub</p> <p>D&J operates WOWRC’s “Ministry with Children, Youth, and Young Adults Fund” with applications due Apr. 1 and Oct. 1 each year. This is a sizeable fund and we encourage applications to create, develop, or attend programs of value. Apply via the regional website.</p> <p>WOW/ARW/HF are contributing substantial funds to offset the registration costs for Audacious Hope 2024 this summer.</p> <p>Kathy Douglas (Faith Formation Minister) gathers youth leaders periodically for support and information sharing. Reach out to Kathy to link with this network.</p>	How can we best utilize WOWRC communications (website, newsletter, social media, etc.) to inform Communities of Faith about learning opportunities? Again, the challenge is in keeping the info timely, accurate, and up-to-date. And determining the scope of which opportunities to amplify is important.	There is little scope for the region to initiate programming for youth and/or young adults. If, however, Communities of Faith or partners or networks wish to create programming, there is significant scope for the region to come alongside as a partner. Providing funds and amplifying narratives are the most tangible gifts we have to offer.
Communities of Faith seek quality educational opportunities to engage issues of social justice.	Regional staff provide learning opportunities that gather people from various Communities of Faith. United-in-Learning offers similar opportunities on a national scale. Retreat centres, university chaplaincies, and local networks (like the Guelph Seminar) offer learning opportunities quite frequently. There are lots of opportunities, but the challenge is knowing about them.	D&J needs to determine how to advise and equip regional staff with the information necessary for good communication. Streamlining the flow of information so as to avoid bottlenecks and increase efficiency is important. How can regional staff and D&J work collaboratively and efficiently to provide our region with the most comprehensive and timely information possible?	

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
<p>Communities of Faith are unsure of the role of the D&J Commission. So far in WOWRC's life, it has been seen primarily as a granting body, extending out grant money, especially for Mission Support. Is there capacity for it to also take on the work of communicating and connecting?</p>	<p>It is increasingly clear that information and funding are two of the most important resources Communities of Faith need in order to do the work of discipleship and justice. In many ways, funding is easier to provide because there are deadlines and structures and deliverables. The flow of information is more nebulous and challenging. But it feels like a challenge the D&J Commission is ready for. Thanks to regional staff, many of the tools for effective communication already exist (website, social media, newsletter, etc.). With some input from D&J it is hoped we can begin optimizing how those tools are used.</p>		

Section 8 - What is our purpose and how will we know we are living it out?

Perhaps a wider conversation specifically about our purpose and how we will know we are living it out would benefit the Regional Council. Is there a way to honour the General Council “Deep Spirituality, Daring Justice, Bold Discipleship” and strengthen our purpose “Connecting, Supporting, Transforming”? Can we create a simple review that asks Communities of Faith if and where they have felt connected, supported, transformed through the Regional Council? Perhaps this could lead to a sharing of stories that would inspire us all and show us more clearly where we are missing the mark.

Section 9 - Equipping the church for "such a time as this"

Identified Need	Response in Progress	Needs a Response Plan	Parking Lot
Encouraging Risk-taking	Does our Growth Animator have a role here?	Are there webinars/workshops we can create/promote	
Grief		Acknowledging this in the worship and work of the WOWRC would be valuable	
Reaching out to Younger People	Hosting Children and Youth at Regional Council, and youth and child events tri-regionally this past year Supporting the work of "The Hub"	Possibilities for Internet ministry?	Let's go even wider and plug into youth work happening nationally
Ministry with Older People		Honour the ministry with older people we are doing	
Responding to hate	A resource was created to help congregations stay safe in the face of hate for PIE Day	Still need to look into whether the region would be eligible for an Ontario Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant	
Sharing Gifts	Collaborative Ministry conversations have been hosted across the regional council Cluster gatherings to inspire sharing too		
Funding that goes beyond "new" things		Will the growth animator be able to help with this?	
Other Outreach	Discipleship and Justice continues to network and support outreach and daring justice	Are there partnerships we can strengthen within our regional council?	There are ways we can connect to the wider church and help promote the outreach work that is happening there.

The United Church Celebrates 100th

The United Church of Canada is celebrating 100 years of ministry in 2024/2025.

How can we in Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council be part of the celebration?



The National celebration kicks off with a worship service on Sunday, June 9th, 2024 at 4:00 pm at Metropolitan United Church in Toronto.

Regional Project

Each Congregation will receive a puzzle piece to decorate – depicting their ministry. These pieces will be returned and put together into a mosaic to be displayed at the 2025 in person Regional Council meeting.

Possible Congregational Projects

- Send 100 youth from our regional council to Rendez-vous 2024- Audacious Hope (a youth event this summer to be held at Brock Univ, St. Catharines). First 100 registrants from the Tri Regions only pay \$100 registration fee.
- Help us identify all members who are 100 years or older in 2024 so we can feature them.
- Plant 100 trees across the regional council – let us know where and how many trees your congregation plants.
- 100 members to each give a special \$100 gift to a United Church program, such as Mission & Service, Gifts with Vision, The Healing Fund, etc. Perhaps we can raise an additional \$10,000 for each of these ministries.
- Each congregation to invite 100 people to attend worship over the next year. Let us know what you did to make them feel welcome.
- Let us know how many new members have joined your church between June 2024 and June 2025. Can we get 100 new members in the regional council?
- Share what your church is doing to celebrate 100 years through our Regional Council Facebook page with a tagline (to be determined).
- Compile 100 reasons why we love the United Church.
- Create 100 paper cranes with prayers on them.
- Reach out to 100 past members/adherents and invite them back for an anniversary service.
- Send 100 letters to advocate for homelessness, food insecurity, etc.

Let us know if you would be interested in a regional council wide event, where communities of faith can gather to worship en masse. Imagine a 100-voice choir? And perhaps a picnic after, with activities and games for all ages, just like the old days! Contact Ann Harbridge at ann.harbridge@gmail.com and let her know if your community of faith might be interested in principle in a spring regional council wide event:

Yes?

No?

Unsure

Human Resources Commission Spring Update

The Human Resources Commission continues to work with Pastoral Charges at the time of changes in Pastoral Relationships. The liaisons are working with many Communities of Faith assisting in navigating the paths that lead to a successful culmination of Search & Selection. The right fit is always our goal and to help relieve the stress when working through Community of Faith Profiles and the Position Description that are required on ChurchHub to make the search viable. The more accurate the paperwork is, the smoother the journey will be.

Our commission is still lacking in commissioners. We should have more lay people involved but the turnout of volunteers is sparse. We have been lacking for over a year and without these required positions being filled we lack some valuable insight when reaching decisions. Our commission meets once monthly on the third Tuesday at 10:00 AM via ZOOM. If you have the time and gifts to offer, the Volunteer Recruitment Team would gladly entertain your Expression of Interest.

Our areas of concern are Calls and Appointment, Licenced Lay Worship Leaders, Short and Long-Term Supply, and training for Ministry & Personnel Committees as well as training for Search & Selection Committees. Training can be online or in the case of Search & Selection, the appointed liaison can do the training in person. Our goal is to appoint liaisons early in the search process to better afford the support many Pastoral Charges need to fulfill their goal. Liaisons are trained to navigate the paperwork and to guide Search Teams to the appropriate handbooks and guidelines that will facilitate the process.

We have begun the initiative of conducting exit interviews when ministers and Communities of Faith agree to them. In this way we hope to build insight into doing what we do better, and to learn what the challenges are that each face to lead to a required change in Pastoral Relationships.

We have found an increasing number of retired ministers that are looking to return to the pulpit. We welcome these re-engaged pensioners and their experience and desire go a long way to filling some of the gaps we uncover.

I mentioned earlier some of the areas we engage in, but they are not all. The WOWRC website has many new restructured elements. Check out the Human Resources section to see if there is an area you feel drawn to. As a liaison you will have the opportunity to be involved in the Covenanting service between a new minister and the Pastoral Charge. In my opinion this is the highlight of the work we do. To see a Minister and Community of Faith that are on the same path at the same time with a common goal. These relationships grow and nurture an exciting future as we enter the 100th year of the United Church of Canada.

Respectfully submitted,
Douglas R. Hayward, Chair, Human Resources Commission

Remit Project Summary

The remit process is now over, passing nationally with 80% of pastoral charges giving their approval. Before the results were announced the Right Relations and Social Justice Minister (Thérèse Samuel) and the Social Justice Minister (John Egger) for the Regional Councils prepared the following report that offers our observations and reflections on the process. The remit was a significant focus for us this past year, and provided us with much contact with individuals and pastoral charges, stretching far beyond the remit itself. We would like to share a bit about what we learned in the process and our reflections on the racism and colonialism that was encountered in the conversations and our thoughts about future directions for this work in right relations and the broader work of anti-oppression and intercultural ministries.

In July of 2022, when the remit was authorized, Thérèse thought, “I know what my next year is going to be focussed on.” But didn’t know how true that would turn out to be.

When the remit question came out in March of 2023, Thérèse provided a presentation to the Discipleship and Justice Commissions (D&J) of ARW, HF and WOW, and all three expressed a commitment to supporting the remit discussion. Thérèse then worked with the Executive Minister (EM) to provide education and question and answer sessions at each of the RC Spring Meetings. Cathy Hird, a WOW Discipleship and Justice Commission (D&J) member, came forward and expressed a desire to encourage the pastoral charges to engage the discussion and vote. In the summer of 2023, the EM assigned John to work with Thérèse in the remit process. Thérèse and John met with Cathy to plan what would become the Remit Reach-Out.

During the next few months, as the remit project moved into high gear, John and Thérèse continued to provide leadership in promoting the remit, while receiving support and guidance from the EM (first Cheryl-Ann, then Mark, then Cheryl-Ann, then Mark again), as well as assistance from other tri-RC staff when needed. We supported Cathy throughout the reach-out process, and worked as a team to provide educational seminars and resources for pastoral charges, to respond to questions about the remit, and to support governing bodies in discussing the remit. For both John and Thérèse, the majority of our work until the end of March was devoted to the remit in one way or another. It took us both a while to realize how much time and energy the remit discussion was going to take, and we also quickly realized that many of the benefits of this work were going to go beyond the remit itself.

We discovered very early on that there is much more to this than was at first apparent. Questions were complex. Some were simply seeking understanding about the remit and its implications, but stirring in the background there were numerous other dynamics, including:

- Troubled relationships with the wider church, polity and past remits, and dissatisfaction with the remit process itself
- Settler colonialism and racism that are embedded in our church and society and were the basis of what was historically known as “missions to the Indians”
- Concerns about the viability (financial and otherwise) of local congregations and the broader United Church
- Layers of grief and uncertainty as the church comes to terms with the harmful impacts of colonialism on Indigenous communities, and as many congregations deal with losses in their own contexts.

We also found that while the remit was about a specific set of changes to *The Manual*, it was also about the breadth of our relationships as Indigenous and Non-Indigenous in The United Church of Canada. These complexities often made it challenging to discern the concerns embedded in questions and to respond to them meaningfully.

We also began to realize that, whether or not the remit was to pass, there would be positive benefits of the remit discussion, including:

- As the church is learning to live into a structure which is still very new, the Remit Reach-Out engagement gave an opportunity for volunteers from across the regional councils to make contacts with leaders in almost all of the pastoral charges
- As the Discipleship and Justice Commissions continue to learn to live into their roles and mandates, through the Remit Reach-Out they have actively initiated contacts with congregations
- Governing bodies and congregations across our regional councils engaged in discussion on right relations in a way that likely would not otherwise have happened and in so doing engaged in relationship as an Indigenous and Non-Indigenous church in a new way
- People in Non-Indigenous congregations across the regional councils grew in their awareness of the Indigenous church within the United Church
- Connections were made between regional councils across the country as we shared and supported one another in our remit promotion activities; this collaboration continues with other portfolios
- John and Thérèse as staff are better equipped to support the regions in a broad range of justice and right relations ministries

Remit Project Components

Presentations:

- 3 RC D&J presentations (TS)
- 6 RC presentations (TS: 3 in team with the EM and 3 in team with JE)
- 4 public presentations (TS&JE: 3 hybrid, 1 online only)
- 1 Outreach Group (TS with Lee Claus)
- At least 4 online visits with PCs in fall and winter (TS&JE)

Resources Created:

- 1 video compilation including Revs. Maggie Dieter and Cathy Hird, and CCDC Martha Pedoniquotte, and a power-point presentation (TS)
- 1 Responses to Questions document (TS&JE with consultation of staff of GCO, IMJ and Indigenous OV)

Numerous consultations with other UCC staff, especially

- Sara Stratton (Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice Animator, Indigenous Ministries and Justice)
- Adele Halliday (Antiracism and Equity Lead, General Council)
- Alison Jordan (Law Clerk, General Council)
- Executive Minister

Remit Reach-Out:

- July- Aug Development of initial process in consultation with Kathy Douglas

- Worked with Cathy as she determined parameters of Reach-out
 - Confidentiality and scope of the role of contact people
 - Putting in place RC Team Leaders from the D&J Commissions
 - Planning orientation for callers
- Accessing and compiling contact lists for 400 PCs in 3 RCs
- Sept Training for Callers
 - Team with Cathy to lead orientation/training for callers
- Received lists of those who had not voted.
 - Initially we had to ask GC for the lists, and by January GC automatically sent out the list every 2 weeks. These were relayed to Cathy.
- Available for follow-up,
 - questions or concerns that callers or team leaders had
 - questions relayed from callers

Receiving questions about or in response to Remit 1, consulting, researching and formulating responses, referring when appropriate, on varied topics including:

- Logistics of the remit—COF ID and M&S number, where to get ballots, etc.
- Questions directly relating to the remit question
- Questions related to Indigenous Ministries that were beyond the scope of the remit
- Questions, concerns and/or dissatisfaction with the remit process itself:
 - ties in with concerns about the previous remits
 - the polity governing remits—why abstentions are not permitted, why changes cannot be made to the question itself, etc.
- Clarifying and responding to questions related to polity and procedures in specific situations:
 - about amalgamating and disbanding PC votes
 - Reconsidering a previously registered vote

Broader work:

- Consulting with GCO and IMJ staff in our communication materials and responses to questions
- Receiving referrals of questions/concerns from GCO and IMJ staff to follow up on some of the more complex questions from PCs in our RCs
- Meetings with GCO, and RC staff in other regions
- Working with Michele and Pretima on communications in Website, Newsletters and social media

Reflections

Remit 1 was asking the wider church to allow the Indigenous church to self-determine its internal organizational structure and procedures within The United Church of Canada, and to authorize changes to *The Manual* that would allow that. But there were assumptions underlying that question that brought specific challenges to many people in congregations.

The remit was not asking for a new structure that would require new funding—the funding and mechanisms for funding the Indigenous church, as well as processes for reviewing how funding is allocated, are already in place and not under question in the remit. It also relied on the wider church trusting the General Council and Indigenous leaders in the church to continue to negotiate that funding. The remit was not asking the church to endorse the *Caretakers' Calls to the Church*—not officially. That was already endorsed by General Council in 2018, and the remit relied on the *Caretakers' Calls* as a

foundational document. But for many in pastoral charges *The Calls to the Church* was a new document, and to consider the remit required understanding and endorsement of *The Calls to the Church*. The remit was on the surface about specific and limited changes to *The Manual*, but on a deeper level it was about entering into relationship in a new way as an Indigenous and Non-Indigenous church.

On the surface, it was a simple and straightforward question. But we gradually realized that for many in the church it was asking something more, something unspoken, something they couldn't quite put their finger on. In recent years there has been much movement happening in Indigenous Ministries and Justice and the NIC and in the evolving relationship between IMJ, NIC and the General Council that most people in congregations are not aware of. The remit directly addressed one specific part of that dynamic—internal organizational structure and procedures. In the beginning it seemed that many people did not understand what they were voting on when it came to the remit question. As we engaged, it became apparent that the remit question and remit process itself did not acknowledge the work that individuals and congregations would be required to do in order to meaningfully discuss and vote on the remit. Most of our engagement on the remit was in addressing these matters that the remit was not directly asking, but that were foundational to the remit question and the remit process itself. And these matters are foundational to our commitments to right relations as Indigenous and Non-Indigenous peoples, and our commitments to trust in God, grow in faith together as disciples of Christ, and to allow the Spirit to work in us and one another.

The irony of the Remit 1 process was that it required the church to follow a settler colonial remit process to loosen our hold on that same settler colonial remit process. It was, in a sense, a remit about remits and as such it drew the church's focus to the remit process in a way that no other remit has (at least, that we are aware of). On the surface it was a simple matter of business and of justice. But deeper down it was asking the church to learn and grow and engage very deeply in a short period of time. Across the tri-regions of ARW, HF and WOW, pastoral charges and individuals took up the challenge and lived into our shared faith. They engaged in what were often risky and difficult conversations in ways that surprised us, that challenged us and that inspired us. We come to the end of the remit process exhausted, but full of hope.

Thérèse's and John's further reflections include:

- On the surface, the remit was about a specific and limited change to our polity and institutional structure. But at its core, the remit was about relationship.
- Observations about underlying but unnamed racist and colonialist assumptions
- The impact of questions within the context of colonialism and racism
- Awareness that people were at vastly different places with the conversation.
- Our engagement in the remit-related dialogue had personal impacts on each of us
- The benefits and necessity of teaming in this work
- We felt it was important to offer the education as non-Indigenous people, and to not burden Indigenous leaders with doing this work for us.
- We noticed a difference between answering questions in a workshop (participants invited into a space where planned the process) and in a meeting of the pastoral charge governing body where we had been invited into their space to answer questions.

We noticed... we wonder...

- We noticed that sometimes people expressed opposition to the remit because of dissatisfaction with the process, and we also noticed that the remit was asking the church to loosen its grip on the remit process and to loosen its grip on the colonial power that is vested in the remit process. We wonder what the church would learn if we had some deep discussions about our polity and the remit process and made space to intentionally listen to all voices, especially the voices of people who feel dissatisfied, disregarded, or silenced by the process.

- We noticed that the remit question brought all kinds of people into the conversation. People with diverse experiences and perspectives entered into conversations in varying degrees—some engaged deeply, some less so.
We wonder, is that engagement a momentary thing? Now that the remit process has closed, is the engagement done and gone? Or will it lead to further engagement in the coming months and years?

Theological Reflection

As we prepare this report, the results of the remit have not yet been revealed. And we are reminded of Moses and the Israelites who journey together. The people may be of different minds and have different expectations. The journey is challenging, but whether the people are pleased or dissatisfied, the journey continues. As it was for Moses and the people, in many ways so, too, is it for us. Many of the changes that were debated in the discussions on the remit are changes that will happen whether the remit passes or not. The journey continues, whether we want it to or not. We have fears, but the journey continues. We are engaged in a project that is bigger than this moment. We are called to trust and be part of the bigger movement not just for ourselves, but for the generations to come. Very likely we, like Moses, will never quite make it to the promised land, but if we remain faithful on the path - not perfect, but faithful - we will find that God gives us a glimpse of it. And through it all, the important thing is that we are in relationship. Relationship with one another. Relationship with God. And even when we falter, even when our actions are not as grand as our intentions, God does not stop guiding us, forgiving us, loving us.

The Remit 1 conversation is over but, as we noted at the beginning, there will be many more conversations ahead. Let us continue to trust that wherever the future takes us, we are not alone. God is with us.

Thanks be to God.

Remit Reach-Out Volunteer Leaders Report

As project coordinator of the Remit Reach Out process, I (Cathy Hird) with Sula Kosacky and Richard Auckland offer this report as a companion to the staff report of Thérèse Samuel and John Egger. Their report focusses on the wider implications of the remit process and on the work they did. We will not repeat their work, though I will quote from it. We are submitting this report to pave the way for future remits, to inform the work of the regional councils, and to reflection on the on-going work of building right relations. The focus here is on the practicalities of the process in the three regions. This report is prepared before the results of the remit have been made public.

In early March 2023, the Discipleship and Justice Commission (D&J) of WOWRC heard Thérèse's initial report on Remit 1, Establishing an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization within The United Church of Canada. I reacted with deep concern, as did other members of all three commissions, because getting a category three remit passed is hard work. Many have failed. At the time I felt that it was essential that we get this remit through. (Later, while I still hoped it would pass, I understood that communities of faith had engaged in the conversation about right relations in a way that would in and of itself make a difference.)

There is a history of right relations work in our church. Most people are aware of the two apologies and the fact that there was an indigenous conference, the ANCC and the existence of the Healing Fund. Many communities of faith and especially UCWs made raising money for that fund a focus. Other aspects of this journey—from the “native consultations” in the 80's to the *Caretakers Calls to the Church*—are not as well known. It was important to provide pastoral charges with background that could inform their conversation and their vote. Some of this was prepared by our tri-region staff—see the report of Thérèse and John—some was prepared by national staff, and other video resources were offered by indigenous individuals and groups within the church.

Recognizing that many pastoral charges are without a settled minister and that many do not have a regional council representative, we knew that some pastoral charges would not hear about the remit and others would not know where to find resources. The idea of having volunteers contact every pastoral charge surfaced. While this would be a major task, it felt essential.

Volunteers were recruited by the chairs of the D&J commissions in ARWRC and HFRC and by Cathy Hird for WOWRC. Some of these were members of the commission. Others were people that the recruiters felt would care enough to engage in this work for eight months. Recruitment happened in August and September. More than thirty people stepped forward and made this commitment.

An online orientation to the work was offered in September. This was held on Zoom and recorded. Volunteers were not given contact information until they had attended or viewed the orientation. While background information was included, there were two specific points: 1, the

role was to encourage pastoral charges to engage in the conversation and to vote, not to press for a specific vote and 2, the contact information for people in the pastoral charge was confidential, to be used only for this process.

Thanks to the work of John Neff, we received four lists with contact information: pastoral charges, pastoral charge roles (i.e., regional council reps, board chairs, board secretaries), ministers, and pastoral charge supervisors. While some of this information was up to date, much was not. This required volunteers to use ingenuity and time to reach these pastoral charges. (The fact that national lists are not up to date is an issue which needs to be considered—the shift to online processes requires congregational initiative and computer skills not everyone has.)

Each of the team leads (Sula, Richard, and Cathy) then divided the list between their volunteers providing all the contact information. A letter was drafted for the volunteers to use providing background on the remit and links to the regional council websites for educational information. The letter requested a reply and gave notice that if there was no reply, a phone call would follow. The volunteers were encouraged to pass questions on to John, Thérèse, and Cathy. This was to help keep the volunteers focused on process and to ensure that questions that surfaced racism and settler colonialism were addressed carefully and appropriately. To quote the report from Thérèse and John, “We also found that while the remit was about a specific set of changes to *The Manual*, it was also about the breadth of our relationships as Indigenous and Non-Indigenous in The United Church of Canada. These complexities often made it challenging to discern the concerns embedded in questions and to respond to them meaningfully.”

Through the fall, the volunteers emailed, followed up by email, followed up with phone calls and/or personal contacts to make sure that the remit remained on the agenda of pastoral charges. A few had voted in the late spring. A few voted in the fall. Many did not vote until February and March.

Once we received lists of who had not yet voted, the team leads distributed this information to the volunteers. Volunteers then knew who to contact again. The way the lists came to us, we again required the assistance of staff devoted to congregational support to identify which “First United” or “Trinity United” had not yet voted. On the other hand, we could now provide pastoral charges with the numbers they needed to put on their remit vote reporting form.

Once we received lists of who had not yet voted, our volunteers also discovered that some pastoral charges that had voted were still on the list. After consultation with Alison Jordan at the national office, pastoral charges were strongly encouraged to take a photo of the ballot once filled out and email it. The process of resubmitting ballots was frustrating. For future remits, the process of receiving ballots needs to be better managed. As far as we know, however, all votes from our three regions were eventually registered. Volunteers who had started this work in September had to keep alert right through March and Holy Week. While

the final stats of how many pastoral charges voted have not yet come out, as a whole, our three regions were well over the national average.

In the evaluation of the regional councils, recommendation 11 suggested that we “determine how the Discipleship and Justice Commission(s) might support the discipleship and justice work in communities of faith and the commitments of the regional council.” While the commissions need to figure out ways to do this going forward, during late 2023 and early 2024, the commissions and additional volunteers helped engage communities of faith in the work of right relations.

A virtual follow-up and feedback meeting is planned for late April. This is an opportunity to thank our volunteers, to learn from them what we could have done better, and to check that folks are okay. Some of the conversations were difficult, and it is important to give people space to debrief.

Additional Concerns

Noted above was the challenge of contact information that was out of date. This is not the place to speculate on why that is so only to note that if regional councils are to engage more closely with communities of faith, this information is crucial.

There were pastoral charges that we were unable to reach. Consultation with the congregational support ministers helped reach some. The Remit Reach-out team will share with those staff who remained unreachable.

Cathy met virtually with a community of faith that is not a pastoral charge. This is a funded and accountable outreach ministry. They wondered why they did not get a vote. This is a good question. As we learn about the remit process (again John and Thérèse raise these questions), is there an underlying assumption that needs to be examined about the place of communities of faith that are not pastoral charges.

There were many good conversations within pastoral charges reported to us by the volunteers. There were complicated conversations with racist and colonial settler overtones. These were difficult at times.

This was a complicated process. A lot of issues were surfaced. I would like to quote Thérèse and John’s report again to make sure that our shared concerns are not missed. They wrote:

We discovered very early on that there is much more to this than was at first apparent. Questions were complex. Some were simply seeking understanding about the remit and its implications, but stirring in the background there were numerous other dynamics, including:

- *Troubled relationships with the wider church, polity and past remits, and dissatisfaction with the remit process itself*

- *Settler colonialism and racism that are embedded in our church and society and were the basis of what was historically known as “missions to the Indians”*
- *Concerns about the viability (financial and otherwise) of local congregations and the broader United Church*
- *Layers of grief and uncertainty as the church comes to terms with the harmful impacts of colonialism on Indigenous communities, and as many congregations deal with losses in their own contexts.*

It is important to recognize that while this past twelve months was an important step in building right relations, the conversation and the work are not finished. The dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous people in our church must continue whether the remit passes or fails.

Submitted by Cathy Hird with Richard Auckland and Sula Kosacky

Office of Vocation – Vocational Minister Update

It is my privilege as the Vocational Minister for the three regions in SW Ontario to provide a report on the work of the Office of Vocation for the past year. I continue to have many conversations with ministers involving the vocational realm: Excitement for a new call or appointment; helping discern “if it’s time for a change”; the stressors and joys of service; and general wide-ranging ministry topics. This report will touch on some elements of this role and you can find the full Office of Vocation Accountability Report to the Board of Vocation in the United Church Commons.

Who Are We?

		% Compared to National Average per Category (it is <i>not</i> % status distribution within region)								
Minister Status @ May 8, 2024	National Distribution of Status by Type		Antler River Watershed		Western Ontario Waterways		Horseshoe Falls		Tri-Regional Councils	
	Active	1806	43.7%	88	4.9%	118	6.5%	124	6.9%	330
Admissions	81	2.0%	1	1.2%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%	2	2.5%
Long Term Disability	62	1.5%	7	11.3%	6	9.7%	4	6.5%	17	27.4%
Ministry Partner	14	0.3%	3	21.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	21.4%
Non-UCC	10	0.2%	2	20.0%	2	20.0%	1	10.0%	5	50.0%
Restorative Care	36	0.9%	1	2.8%	3	8.3%	3	8.3%	7	19.4%
Retired	2128	51.4%	113	5.3%	172	8.1%	175	8.2%	460	21.6%
Totals	4137	100.0%	215	5.2%	301	7.3%	308	7.4%	824	19.9%

Candidacy Pathway

At the end of December 2023, there were 193 candidates for ministry in Candidacy Pathway, guided by the 7 Candidacy Boards and resourced by Vocational Ministers. The SW Ontario Candidacy Board has been meeting entirely online for the past year and engages with other Candidacy Boards in regular gatherings hosted by the General Council Office to “tend to the

pathway” as needs arise and to share and receive best practices. There has been a recent update to the role of the Community of Faith Connection team, and in October 2022 the new Guide to Competencies for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership was implemented.

The SW Ontario Candidacy Board currently has 25 candidates in various phases of the Pathway (plus 1 to be Commissioned and 3 to be Ordained on May 25, 2024) with more applicants to be interviewed for Suitability for Ministry throughout 2024.:

3 in the Designated Lay Ministry Program at St. Andrew’s College, Saskatoon SK

6 in the Diaconal program at the Centre for Christian

Studies, Winnipeg MB 15 in Ordained programs:

- 6 Emmanuel College, Toronto ON
- 7 Atlantic School of Theology – Summer Distance Integrated, Halifax NS
- 2 Vancouver School of Theology

Many candidates are in ministry-based integrated programs requiring Supervised Ministry Education (SME) sites; similar to 2022, the 2023 calendar year had 15 active SME appointments at December 31, 2023 with 17 active as of May, 2024.

The SW Ontario Candidacy Board has partnered with the Indigenous Church to arrange a unique SME partnership experience with Grand River United Church, Six Nations of the Grand River. A non-Indigenous candidate is exploring and developing ministry leadership with a focus on the parallel path, while being mentored by an elder and a Grandmother’s Circle. It is proving to be full of learnings and deepened relationship.

A functioning SME site requires intensive investment and discernment by Communities of Faith (CoF), Regional staff, Regional Commissions, and Educational Supervisors. Together they do the critically important work of candidate formation. SME appointments are generally 24 months and during that time, candidates meet regularly with their Educational Supervisor and Community of Faith Connection Teams. Working collaboratively these three bodies perform evaluations, work on Learning Goals, offer theological reflections and identify and ensure opportunities for growth in the competencies of ministry.

The Regions support SME experiences and Candidate formation by offering initial discernment meetings with CoF leadership when a congregation wonders about engaging with the ministry of formation; providing financial support to candidates; appointing pastoral charge supervisors to an SME site; and, continuous pastoral relations support. In addition to the 17 candidates in SME appointments, there are 5 candidates in supply appointments not under supervision (diaconal; in 5th year of AST integrated program; or are about to complete 3rd year in non- integrated MDiv program and will interview for SME Readiness in 2024.)

The SW Ontario Candidacy Board is incredibly thankful for the more than 107 volunteers

that facilitate Candidacy Pathway in our regions. (17x4 CFC + 22 Charge Supervisors + 17 Educational Supervisors – *all volunteers* - that make ensure that those in Candidacy Pathway become faithful, effective and well-equipped to serve the church.) God is good!

The Board is ably and well-served by its current membership:

Rev. Laurie O’Leary, Chairperson	Pastor Jenn Brown
Rev. Tessica Hackshaw	Rev. Ann Stafford
Rev. Gerry Hofstetter	Rev. Wendy Noble
Rev. Mary Elizabeth Piercy	Nancy Hind, Recording Secretary
Rev. Gord Dunbar	

The SWON CB meets monthly on the third Thursday morning of each month and interviews 6x per year (the Thursday afternoon and Friday mornings of 6 different months in addition to their regular third-Thursday meetings).

Admissions (excerpted from the Office of Vocational Accountability Report)

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.

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. The Admissions Pilot Matching Program began in 2023, and evaluation of the Admissions experience and various processes revealed two priorities:

- We need to help these ministers get their foot in the door. They have so many skills and gifts that The United Church of Canada has identified as needed in our strategic plan.
 - o One fifth of them are people who have or are currently working on PhDs.
 - o Almost all of them speak at least two languages, with many of their additional languages being those that newcomers to Canada also speak.
 - o All of them bring diverse theological backgrounds and life experiences that can enrich our denomination. Many of them have specialized experience in ministry such as youth ministry, church planting, chaplaincy, and ecumenical work.

- We need to continue working with congregations to confront xenophobia and racism; as well as making sure that support for search teams are well informed of

the Admission process and the benefits of considering an applicant from another country. While the myth exists in our denomination that we have a shortage of ministers, the reality is that we have more than 50 who are available. They simply need our search teams to recognize that they are highly qualified, experienced ministers who are keen and feeling to called to serve in The United Church of Canada.

Enhancing Effectiveness, Oversight and Discipline Of Ministry Personnel

(excerpted from the Office of Vocational Accountability Report)

This area represents a significant portion of the work of the Office of Vocation, and is managed by staff, elected members who sit on the response and remedial committees, along with consultants, reviewers and investigators. There was a training event held in person over 5 days for 39 Consultants, Investigators, Reviewers and Staff of the Office of Vocation in October, including the revisions made to the Sexual Misconduct and Workplace Discrimination, Harassment and Violence Response Policies & Procedures and Office of Vocation: Structure & Responsibilities, Appendix A.

Sabbatical and Strategic Plan

From September through November, 2023, I was on sabbatical with a project focused on analyzing the outcomes of the Response and Remedial committees, and identifying supports to ministry personnel to regain effectiveness. Response and Remedial are the bodies responsible for managing the Complaint Response process involving ministry personnel.

This project aligned with my role as Activity lead in the Strategic Plan; specifically, “**Activity lead in 2.2.1** related to examining work done previously in effective leadership including regarding isolation.” My research involved reading the complete set of minutes of these two committees since inception and seeking to identify if isolation had a role in the precipitating action to the complaint. Between January 1, 2019 and January 31, 2024 (60 months) the Response Committee met 48 times and the Remedial Committee met 106 times. At September 7, 2023 Response had ordered 61 investigations or reviews (formal process) of ministry personnel.

The roles of Vocational Minister, Pastoral Relations Minister or Community Capacity Development Coordinator, and others involved in this work are also consistently engaged in informal processes. This data set had the possibility of expansion to analyze and provide learnings related to ministry effectiveness and isolation that are not captured in the formal process. I asked the Vocational Ministers to tally up their informal situations that met the following criteria:

- You have had concerns about minister's performance brought to you by the Pastoral Relations Minister or M&P or other body that has knowledge (perhaps a fellow ministry colleague or yourself); *and*,
- Does not fit into our formal complaint process; *and*,
- You have had at least 2 long conversations about the concerns directly with the minister that includes areas of growth or development for them; *and*,
- The PRM or Executive Minister or M&P or Regional Staff/Commissions (or combination of same/similar) is also party to various conversations/concerns about this person's ministry; *and*,
- You suspect that they are isolated, lonely, do not have collegial support in their role, or do not engage in wider church or regional events. You might also colloquially call some of these ministers "Lone Wolves."

At September 30, 2023 an additional 119 ministers since 2019 were identified that might qualify for consideration of the focus of this project. From the Board of Vocation Accountability Report, "the themes arising in the remedial work are

- a. emotional intelligence (self-awareness and relationship management)
- b. boundaries power dynamics
- c. awareness of polity and procedures
- d. isolation in ministry practice
- e. relationships with persons served
- f. concerns related to social media use.

Newer themes emerging relate to understanding of, and compliance with, oversight responsibilities; those in long-term pastoral relationships, and those who have not utilized their full study leave, vacation and sabbatical opportunities. The Remedial Committee is hoping to seek out additional resources for Directed Programs, particularly learning what other denominations find effective in similar remedial matters, in 2024."

There have been many instances in the Remedial process where developing conflict resolution skills, attending emotional intelligence workshops and working with an executive coach or Spiritual Director on specific goals, and mentorship by United Church ministry colleagues have been very successful components in directed learning programs.

Respectfully submitted,



Tanya Cameron, MBA Vocational Minister

Antler River Watershed, Western Ontario Waterways and Horseshoe Falls Regions

United Church Rural Ministry Network



2024 UPDATE FOR ANNUAL MEETINGS OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

The United Church Rural Ministry Network (UCRMN) is a national network, that connects electronically sharing stories and news of rural communities across Canada (and around the world), by networking with lay and clergy leaders of rural communities of faith. Find us on website ucrmn.ca.

Let me walk with you through some of the resources on the UCRMN website. Peter Chynoweth (Cochrane, AB) is the web minder. The 'Network' connection includes a partner Atlantic Canada network called Rural Roots Through the Holy which has sponsored conferences in the Maritimes for 3 years. In the Prairies is highlighted the ecumenical Centre for Rural Community Leadership and Ministry (CiRCLe M) which has connections to Saskatoon Theological Union. CiRCLe M is hosting a conference, Experiencing the Rural Culture of the Alberta Foothills, June 18-21.

Then there are 'Resources'. I would like to recommend to all 'Tech Resources'. Martin Dawson, from Cornwall, PEI, and web minder Peter Chynoweth write thoughtfully, with humour and matters of ethical consideration of computers. They discuss the use of inexpensive software, like the free Jitsi meet instead of Zoom, refurbishing old and tired computers using open source software – in short, 'tech for scarce budgets' with an eye to keeping our tech out of landfills.

Next comes practical and helpful information on Collaborative Ministry, ways for congregations and communities of faith to work in partnership with others.

Then there are interviews that Martin hosts: With Peter on Open Software as an Ethical Alternative; with George Bott on Rural Connect; with Catherine Smith on her views of rural ministry and initiatives in the Maritimes; with Catherine Christie and Eric Skillings on the founding and workings of UCRMN. (These interviews are also found on Short-Wave Radio stations, a huge love of Martin's)

The next area is Workshops, with information about the quarterly Zoom workshops that UCRMN has hosted through the years. During this Regional Council year, 2023-24, workshops have been: on April 18 - Social Media in the Rural Church, facilitated by United Church Digital Team, Cara Czech, Stephen

Fetter and Aaron Gallogos; Feb. 15 – Life Long Learning facilitated by St. Andrew’s College staff, Dr. Bernon Lee and Shawn Sanford Beck; Nov. 16 – Pastoral Care to the Rural Church, led by Kathy Douglas of Antler River Watershed; Sept. 21 – further discussions on Collaborative Ministry; June 22 - Radically Welcoming and Rural, the opportunities of Diversity in the Rural Church.

Then there is ENews, with an archive of all the past ENews, from 2020 to 2024. We print 9 editions of UCRMN ENews during the year. Events happening throughout the Church are publicized, advertising from Regions and committees, the regular column on Tech Advice, a regular column from Joyce Sasse’s Gleanings of a Prairie Pastor, reports from Conferences, and most importantly, stories from congregations of community action and ministries. We love to have stories shared. If you have something to tell, send an article (about 300 to 500 words) to editor@UCRMN.ca.

There are over 400 members of UCRMN across the country and in most Regional Councils. As a Network, UCRMN asks for financial support from each Regional Council. We thank those who have given support from their Networking funds. Our suggestion is \$300 from each RC - UCRMN wishes to support all the Regional Councils in their rural ministries. (70% of United Church congregations across the country are in rural or small towns, therefore a relevant cost to each Regional Council.)

UCRMN members are taking part in the “Rural Townhall” by Edge Network for Ministry Development, to hear peoples’ thoughts about what is going on in rural churches, and how rural ministries can be supported.

We are a grassroots initiative for Rural Ministry in the United Church of Canada. Our goal is to connect the many Rural Ministry initiatives across Canada.

Respectfully submitted by UCRMN Board:

Catherine Christie, President UCRMN, Abbey, SK, Living Skies RC

Eric Skillings, Secretary/Treasurer UCRMN, Merlin, ON, Antler River Watershed RC

Shelley Roberts, Vice President UCRMN, Lanark ON, Eastern Ontario Outaouais RC

Donna Mann, Officer UCRMN, Elora ON, Western Ontario Waterways RC

Yvonne Terry, Officer UCRMN, Milestone SK, Living Skies RC

Emmanuel College 2024 Update to Regional Councils



EMMANUEL COLLEGE
OF VICTORIA UNIVERSITY IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Spring 2024

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Dear Friends:

On behalf of Emmanuel College, I want to bring greetings to your region as you meet this spring season. I pray that your meeting goes well and that you experience God's presence and blessing in this important work of the church. **My name is HyeRan Kim-Cragg and it is my privilege to bring you greetings as Emmanuel's Principal.** I hope to see you in person in the near future and share good news of Emmanuel College with you and hear good news of this region's wonderful ministry.

Faculty Compliment, Trauma Informed Pedagogy & Faculty on the Road

Last year, we completed three significant faculty searches, marking historical milestones for the Toronto School of Theology (TST) of which we are a part. Rev. Dr. Glenn McCullough joined as assistant professor through a partnership with Knox, a first in TST's history. Dr. Jenny Bright became Emmanuel's first assistant professor of Buddhist Spiritual Care and Counseling. **The Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne will be appointed as the first assistant professor of United Church of Canada studies at Emmanuel** after completing her moderator's role in December 2025. Additionally, Néstor Medina was promoted to associate professor, and Pam McCarroll to full professor, holding the Jane and Geoffrey Martin Chair in Practical Theology.

This academic year, the faculty has engaged training in Trauma Informed Pedagogy (TIP), with monthly discussions involving faculty, staff, and Research Fellows. TIP emerged from student discussions in response to our EDIA stance, "DEAR" (Dignity, Equity Accountability, Responsibility) Declaration, and has been supported by grants from the Wabash Center and the Association of Theological Schools. We plan to host a TST-wide conference in May 2024 to share our insights and impact other theological schools.

The current faculty is keen to go out into different communities of faith to promote Emmanuel and share their scholarship and wisdom. Andrew Aitchison as Admissions Counsellor and Recruitment Coordinator will be a liaison connecting faculty with communities. Please let him know if your communities want to invite our Christian, Muslim or Buddhist faculty. That would be so wonderful.

The Indigenous Healing Garden Project

This project, which aligns beautifully with Victoria University's sustainability strategic framework and Emmanuel's commitment to right relations with Indigenous communities, is currently underway, thanks to an initial grant from the United Church Foundation's Seeds of Hope. Brook

McKillop, the architectural firm, has been commissioned to redesign the courtyard which features the Crucified Woman Sculpture. The proposed designs have received approval from the project's advisory committee in collaboration with the Indigenous Elder circle. We aim to begin construction this summer and anticipate project completion by 2025, as part of the UCC Centennial celebration.

Major Celebrations at Emmanuel College

In the next few years, there are several significant anniversaries we're eagerly looking forward to celebrating! Firstly, in 2024-2025 we'll be commemorating three remarkable milestones: the 10th anniversary of the Buddhist Focus in our Master of Pastoral Studies (MPS) program, the 15th anniversary of the Muslim Focus in the MPS program, and the grand 100th Anniversary of the United Church of Canada. In 2025-26 we will celebrate 30 years of the Committee on Asian/North American Asian Theologies (CANAAT). Then fast forward to 2027-2028, which promises to be another monumental period, marking the 20th anniversary of the Master of Sacred Music Program and the 100th anniversary of Emmanuel College itself. Stay tuned for more information about these celebrations to come.

I envision our celebrations will incorporate multiple fundraising opportunities to establish scholarships, enriching our offerings and supporting marginalized students. Notable progress has already been made in securing scholarships. We proudly unveiled our first named scholarship for Buddhist students in February 2024. Efforts are underway to establish a Korean Scholarship, with an inaugural fundraising dinner held this past fall, and another planned as a music concert commemorating the 100th birth year of the Right Rev. Dr. Sang Chul Lee on October 26, 2024, at Willowdale Emmanuel United Church. Additionally, a special fundraising event is in the works to establish a scholarship for Queer students, scheduled for November 2 for Drag Show paid event, in collaboration with the Drag and Spirituality Summit, to be held at Emmanuel November 1 to 3, 2024.

Hybrid Master of Divinity Program

Our Hybrid Master of Divinity (MDiv) program began this past year which allows for 2 years of a 3-year MDiv can be done online. We hope this will reach more prospective students outside of the Greater Toronto Area. [Read this story](#) about two folks who began the Hybrid MDiv this year.

Multi-faith Spiritual Life

Spiritual and religious activities thrive, in person every week, Tuesday and Wednesday. These sessions are led by Buddhist faculty members, guest religious leaders and our dedicated student Spiritual Life Team (SLT), along with students from Christian worship/preaching and Buddhist ritual courses. This SLT is enrolled in a year-long course for credit called "Worship and Ritual Leadership Practicum." Our Wednesday Spiritual Life Gathering continues to be the heartbeat of our week and alternates between Christian Worship and a Multi-faith Gathering. These gatherings are streamed live on YouTube and are open to the public and all are welcome!

Faith Community Partnerships

Over the past year and a half, we've been fortunate to receive community lunch sponsorships from various Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist faith communities. They've joined us at Emmanuel to share food, stories, and teachings about their faith traditions while learning from our students about their interfaith experiences. Addressing food insecurity is crucial today, and providing meals to our students in this manner has been a great blessing. If your church is interested in partnering with Emmanuel, please be in touch!

Financial Support

Emmanuel College continues to provide significant financial support to students. Through the John W. Billes Fund, Emmanuel continues to provide 100% of tuition coverage to all domestic students who are registered full-time in the M.Div. program and who are engaged in The United Church of Canada's candidacy pathway process. All basic degree domestic full-time students are eligible for our **Entering Theological Education grant, which offers 50% tuition coverage to their first year courses.** We also offer all (domestic and international) students who are registered in the Ph. D. program, 100% tuition coverage for four years. For more information about studying at Emmanuel College and about the financial support available for all Emmanuel programs, whether one is studying full-time or part-time, please contact Andrew Aitchison, emmanuel.admissions@utoronto.ca.

Emmanuel is offering an increasing number of Continuing Education events online. These events are offered through the Centre for Religion and Its Contexts (CRIC). A list of upcoming offerings are found on the [Emmanuel College website](#). For further information about these events please contact Shawn Kazubowski-Houston: ec.events@utoronto.ca.

Please follow us on social media:

[Facebook:](#) @EmmanuelCollegeofVic
[Instagram:](#) @emmanuelcollegetoronto
[YouTube:](#) @EmmanuelCollege1

If you have questions or are seeking further information about Emmanuel College, please be in touch with us or explore Emmanuel: <http://bit.ly/exploremmanuel>.

Yours sincerely,



Rev. Dr. HyeRan Kim-Cragg,
Principal
Timothy Eaton Memorial Church Professor of Preaching
Emmanuel College