

Welcome to the 2026 Spring Meeting of the Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council:  
Stop and Listen!

It is such an honour for me to be able to chair this Spring Meeting on behalf of our current President, Reverend Rebekah Duncan, so that she can have the time she needs to stop and listen to her body as she continues to recover, even while her mind and spirit long to be with us.

I pray that this meeting will live up to the vision she had for it and offer each one of us an opportunity to rest from the noise and movement of a busy world so that we might truly listen—to one another and to the Spirit of God in our midst.

As you prepare for this meeting, I would encourage you to put just as much emphasis on the “stop” as you do to the “listen”. So often, we find ourselves caught up in the whirlwind of our daily lives that it becomes almost impossible to tune in and “hear” each other, let alone what the spirit might be saying to the church. Understandable really since there are church fundraisers to host and worship services to plan and meetings to attend. It’s a lot of go, go, go to keep our communities of faith alive and well. Yet, I’m sure you have all found immense value in taking the time to slow down, just sit, wait a minute for the dust to settle and the spirit to enwrap you.

Recognizing just how hard this first step of ‘stopping’ is, we have set up a quiet space at the UNIFOR Centre separate from the meeting space that we hope you will take advantage of. The beautiful grounds with fish and fountains, trees and pathways also provides a space for decompressing and recentering ourselves. And throughout the meeting—in worship, theme conversation, presentation engagement, workshops, and table group time there is an invitation to cool the heat and slow the pace.

Centered in this way, we can be intentional in deepening our relationships with one another and opening ourselves to really listen deeply to each other, in all our diversity. A kind of listening that goes beyond that which we can hear with our ears. In these quiet centres, miraculously, there is also room for the Spirit of God to guide us.

As we “Stop and Listen” at this WOWRC Spring Meeting, let us pray that our connections within the regional council will be strengthened in ways that support our common ministries and also enable us to go home with a renewed energy and enthusiasm for our individual ministries.

Yours in Service,

Jennifer Irving, Acting President