

Living Skies Regional Council
The United Church of Canada
3rd Annual Meeting
June 4-5, 2021

Session 1: Friday, June 4, 7:00 p.m.

Opening and Introductions

Tricia Gerhard, Chairperson for the Regional Council Executive, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone, saying that she was glad they had chosen to spend this time together to do the work of the church.

She explained that Rob Reed, Convenor for the Annual Meeting, was not able to be present due to pastoral concerns, and she asked that he and his Community of Faith be held in prayer.

Tricia introduced Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister; Jamie McKay, Regional Executive Assistant and Annual Meeting Recording Secretary; Kent Mohn, Youth and Young Adult Minister; Bev Diebert, Administrative Support; Tracy Murton, Pastoral Relations Minister; Madeleine McLuhan-Myers, Archivist; Heather Dootoff, Finance Administrator; Julie Graham, Minister: Justice and Communications; Darrell Reine, Rob Reed, Hoeun Lee, and Bonnie Morton, Regional Gathering Planning Committee Members; Alan Hall, Executive Officer, Ministry and Employment and General Council Guest; Karen Medland, Office of Vocation Minister; Charlene Burns, Community Capacity Development Coordinator (Western Canada), Indigenous Ministries Circle; and Vicki Nelson, Stewardship Animator (Western Canada).

Tricia Gerhard constituted the meeting with these words,

“In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the authority vested in me by this Regional Council, I declare the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Living Skies Regional Council of The United Church of Canada open for worship, study, companionship and such business as shall properly come before it”.

Tricia stated the Land Acknowledgement with these words,

“We come together this evening from many places across Living Skies Regional Council, places that are on the traditional territories and treaty lands of strong and diverse First Nations and the homeland of the Metis peoples. As we gather, let us respect and honor these traditional lands. Let us pray that as we acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past, we will be motivated to faithfully move forward in partnerships with our Indigenous siblings and the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration. We are all Treaty People.”

Opening Worship

The Rev. Hoeun Lee introduced the Opening Worship.

The recorded service can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhxXEgnUrIE>.

The opening prayer, was by Nobuko Iwai, who invited the meeting participants to listen and experience the sounds and the words “breathe” or “breath” in many languages.

The hymn, “With the Wings of our Mind” (words by IkHwan Moon, music by Don Whan Cho), was led by the 2021 Living Skies Regional Council Virtual Choir, directed by Yoonjoo Shin.

The Very Rev. Jordan Cantwell addressed becoming an Anti-Racist Church, referencing the story, from Acts 16, of Paul and Silas being beaten and jailed for healing a slave girl, ending her exploitation. After an earthquake opened the doors of the prison, the prisoners remained inside, and the astonished and relieved jailer and his family were baptized. Jordan asked the delegates to notice the power disruptions and, and the resulting mutuality: salvation for the jailer and those jailed, and

reflected that this story shows how essential anti-racism work is, and concluded with these words: "This is our healing journey. We cannot wait."

Sarah Tut talked about the anniversary of George Floyd's death, and how his dreams, goals, visions, faith, and labours to build community were lost. We are family with goals and dreams and faith and working every day to better our communities, lives, church. We must not only condemn racism, and preach sermons against racism: our job is to have resources in place to confront racism in our community and in our places of worship. As followers of Christ, it is our job to not only talk, but to stand up as Jesus did.

The Rev. Mitchell Anderson, a member of the English River First Nation, began by sharing that his faith and conviction in racial justice and the pursuit of reconciliation is grounded in the person and work of Jesus Christ: what Jesus Christ did on the cross is for us all. We pursue racial justice and reconciliation: these are at the heart of who we are, and what we are called to be as the church. Our old selves of mistakes, guilt, sin, including colonialism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, and all the evils of our time, die with Jesus on the cross. If our lives are changed, our calling is to work together, and with Jesus, to make the whole world new, where justice makes its home.

The Rev. SunDo Hyun: reminded delegates that anti-Asian racism has been present in Canada for centuries; preventing Asian-Canadians from immigrating to Canada, voting, working in public work, and making them vulnerable to violence. He reflected on the genophobic rhetoric in the story of the baby Moses, and the King of Egypt's policy of fear, hostility towards foreigners, oppression, hate, exploitation, and genocide, reminding us of the Indigenous women coming forward with their accounts of forced sterilization as recently as 2018. Yet, in the midst of crisis, Shiphrah and Puah acted in compassion in the face of great opposition. Their act of "Hebrews Lives Matter" was based in faith of the God of life, justice and love. SunDo Hyun concluded with an invitation to delegates to ponder: "What does it mean to follow Jesus the midst of fear and stress and incredible challenge?"

The Rev. Nobuko Iwai reflected on how, when Jesus widened his definition of family, his birth family seemed to disappear. As we seek to become an anti-racist church, it seems that we are trying to uncover that which seems to disappear quite easily, and to spotlight those who have been missed. The solution is not to be "colour blind" and ignore differences, allowing others to buy into the "Model Minority Myth" (work hard and blend in and succeed, and not be touched by the racism that other groups experience). Racism touches all of us, whether or not one is a person of colour. There is a challenge when tempted to stay invisible in these words: "God sees the little sparrow fall", and, "I know God loves us too".

Cindy Jordison reflected how to make a difference in the complicated and monumental task of being an ally for racial justice. Reading materials with others, allowing for introspection and connection with the thoughts of others, can be an avenue to open the discussion and initiate the journey. We have access to multiple forms media that are thought-provoking and relevant. Reading, seeing, and listening to new perspectives in variety can contribute to breaking down the barriers of defensiveness, fear, guilt and ignorance, and expand our capacity to understand how racial justice benefits all of us.

Judy Shire reflected on joining the racial justice study group to learn more about racism, and finding out how overwhelming it was, and how there was so much to learn, in terms of language, and uncomfortable questions related to everyday life: our individual and collective responsibility for white supremacy and how to challenge it. We are part of a racist system, and we need to deal with racial prejudice and deal with our racial biases. We can raise our awareness and be an ally for racial justice by recognizing racism, and supporting one another on our journey towards being an anti-racist church.

Deanna Gruending-Hallman talked about where we go from here, how we can tackle this issue to which we, as predominantly white congregations, have just been awakened. We can continue to learn and

talk about racism in an open, listening, and non-judgemental way. We can acknowledge our privilege and check that privilege in the way we speak, and in the assumptions we make. Territorial acknowledgement in Worship, learning about Black History and celebrating Black culture in February, and learning from Asian Heritage resources in May, are examples of initiatives that Communities of Faith can participate in towards racial justice, and learn to benefit from the gifts of racial diversity.

The delegates were given a moment to reflect on the question, “what is one question you are sitting with so far?” Everyone was invited to share their feelings or questions in the chat box.

Excerpts from the United Church Anti Racism Policy, That All May be One (2000), were read for reflection.

Galatians 3: 26-28 was read to conclude the conversation.

Tricia Gerhard acknowledged that we continue in mourning with our Indigenous friends over the discovery of 215 unmarked children’s graves at the Kamloops Residential School. The names of the Residential Schools in the Living Skies Region were read, and the poem, *Angels: 215 > 1820-1979, The Past is Always Our Present*, by Louise B. Halfe-Sky Dancer, Parliamentary Poet Laureate.

Jordan Cantwell and SunDo Hyun led a prayer, and “We are a Rainbow” was sung, led by the Living Skies Regional Council Virtual Choir.

Jordan Cantwell and SunDo Hyun gave the blessing and sending forth.

Enabling Motions

The meeting continued with an introduction to the voting procedure for consideration of the enabling motions. The full text of the enabling motions can be viewed at: <https://livingskiesrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Sec-A-21-Docket-updated.pdf> (Page A13).

The enabling motions were moved by Shannon McCarthy and seconded by Darrell Reine. The motion was Carried.

Proposals

Proposal Presentations

There were two Proposals to be considered at this Annual Meeting. The full text of the proposals as presented can be viewed at: <https://livingskiesrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/SecG21.pdf>

Proposal 1: Living Skies Regional Council Policy on Justice

Originator: the Rev. SunDo Hyun

The Proposal, presented by SunDo Hyun, called for the Regional Council to:

- establish a Justice Committee to promote justice and equity for all people in all aspects of life and work of the Region Council, with terms of reference to be created by the Executive; and
- that the committee develop and adopt policies on justice based on anti-racist and anti-oppressive principles and the voices from Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Colour, LGBTQTT2S+ peoples, and people with poverty, disability, mental illness, and more; and drawing on past Saskatchewan Conference and present national church justice, equity, and intercultural policies as relevant.

Proposal 2: Reinstatement of Funding for Spiritual Care throughout the Saskatchewan Health Authority

Originators: Daryl Woods, Chair of North Saskatchewan Hospital Chaplaincy; and Randy Graham, Chair of South Saskatchewan Hospital Chaplaincy.

The Proposal, introduced by Daryl Woods, called for the Regional Council to:

- issue a formal request to the Saskatchewan Health Authority, the provincial Minister of Health, and the Premier of Saskatchewan for the re-instatement of adequate funding and support for Spiritual Care programs in the provincial healthcare budget; and
- encourage Communities of Faith and members/adherents throughout the Living Skies Region to contact their Members of Legislative Assembly with a request to re-instate adequate funding and support for Spiritual Care programs in the provincial healthcare budget.

After the Proposals were presented, the Delegates were placed into break-out rooms for small group conversation to determine if there were any questions for clarification, to talk about how they feel about the proposals, and to discuss any changes that they would make to the proposals.

Comments from the break-out rooms were emailed to livingskies@united-church.ca for consideration of the Business Committee prior to discussion and voting on Proposals the following day.

Music Break: the singing of "I Danced in the Morning" (VU 352) was led by Layne and Liam Jones

Proposal 1: Responses to Questions for Clarification

- The Justice Committee would be focused on all areas of justice, but grounded in principles of racial justice; it could work with clusters and networks, and would be accountable to the Regional Council.
- The intention is that it be relevant to the Living Skies Regional Council (LSRC), but committee members do not need to be members of the Regional Council. Only members of Commissions must be LSRC members.
- If the Nominations Committee will need to recruit membership, then information about the number and make-up of Justice Committee members, and a clear mandate will help.
- All committees are corresponding members of the Executive, and can attend and communicate with the Executive regularly.
- It is intended to be a committee, or a better structure would be acceptable to the originators.
- The budget would be part of the Committees Budget.
- The Justice Committee would be accountable to the Regional Council in its reporting, and to the Executive between RC meetings for day-to-day operations
- The Executive would have to determine how Right Relations work would fit into the Justice Committee mandate. There are networks already doing right relations work.

Proposal 2: Responses to Questions for Clarification.

- The proposed funding would likely be for hospitals in Regina and Saskatoon, where the chaplaincies are centred, but the Proposal references the provincial budget, and so other hospitals should be included.

At the end of the session, the presenters and the delegates were thanked for their work and their input to the discussion.

Benediction

Tricia Gerhard gave a Benediction and thanked those gathered for sharing their weekend with the church, and the session concluded at 9:14 p.m.