

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

Session 2: Saturday, June 5, 9:30 a.m.

Opening

Tricia Gerhard, Chairperson for the Regional Council Executive, welcomed the participants.

Morning Worship

The morning Worship was led by Lorna King and Emily Carr, the South and North Saskatchewan Hospital Chaplains, respectively.

Lorna began with the Land Acknowledgement.

Matthew 25:34-40, was read, telling the story of those who showed hospitality, fed, clothed and visited Jesus when they did these things for the least of their siblings in the community.

Lorna shared a story about a moment of unexpected pastoral care, from her experiences in hospital chaplaincy. A listening ear and a caring heart became the cup in water in Jesus' name.

Emily shared an experience of when things didn't go well in her day, but a moment with a colleague at the end of the day made all the difference. This is a reminder of why we are here: to be present to the needs around us, even if our to-do list doesn't get done.

Emily and her guitar led the singing of "Spirit, Open My Heart" (MV 79).

Lorna led a closing prayer, commending the delegates to the work ahead, and ending with a Celtic Blessing.

Reports

Darrell Reine, Regional Gathering Planning Committee Convenor, chaired the meeting while Tricia Gerhard, Regional Council Executive Chairperson, gave her report.

Tricia referred the delegates to her written report in the docket for the meeting:

<https://livingskiesrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/SecB21.pdf>

Recent Executive action included a letter that was sent to the Saskatchewan Provincial Government asking for a ban against conversion therapy in Saskatchewan, with no response as yet. Communities of Faith are encouraged to join the discussions, noting that conversions are still happening in Regina and Saskatoon. An invitation will be coming to Communities of Faith encouraging them to send letters to the provincial government as well.

As follow-up to the last Annual Meeting, the Regional Council is discontinuing assessments for additional Community Ministry funding. A universal Community Ministries Fund has been created to distribute funding equitably to the Community Ministries. The fund will be administered by the Grants Committee. Information about donating to the fund is posted on the Regional Council website, and will be distributed in the *Rambler* newsletter.

More information will be circulated about the work of the Community Ministries, and the delegates were encouraged to share it widely.

Discussion: the impact on Community of Faith assessments is still being worked out with Erik Mathiesen; Indigenous Ministries funding is self-governed by the General Council Indigenous Ministries and Justice unit, and comes from Mission and Service; It is frustrating to see this separation between community and Indigenous ministries; Communities of Faith are asked to

contribute a portion of proceeds all property sales to the Indigenous Ministries and Justice funding system; Indigenous Ministries and Justice is looking at setting up an Indigenous Regional Council. Tricia Gerhard resumed chairing the meeting, and thanked Darrell Reine for chairing during her report.

Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister, began her report by saying how good it was to see everyone, and that she was looking forward to travelling to Saskatchewan again soon.

Shannon thanked Tricia and the Executive for their work over the past year. In spite of meeting via Zoom, which is exhausting, thoughtful and careful consideration was given to all of their work. The volunteers and ministry personnel, particularly the Nominations Committee, were thanked for carrying out their extremely difficult work during this transition. Former Conference and Presbytery volunteers were encouraged to come back for justice, affirming, and all kinds of Regional Council work that needs their gifts and skills.

Shannon expressed appreciation for the work of the staff: for doing an incredible job at this time, and reaching out to help people in new and different ways: Tracy Murton, Pastoral Relations Minister; Bev Diebert, Administrative Support; Madeleine McLuhan-Myers, Archivist; Kent Mohn, Youth and Young Adult Minister; Heather Dootoff, Financial Administrator; Julie Graham, Regional Minister: Justice and Communication; Vicki Nelson, Stewardship Animator for Western Canada and Jamie Mckay, Regional Executive Assistant.

The delegates were referred to Shannon's written report in the docket: <https://livingskiesrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/SecB21.pdf>

Shannon also referred the delegates to the United Church Website, to view how the General Council has responded to the finding of 215 unmarked graves in Kamloops, BC, including responses and prayers from Moderator, Richard Bott, and Murray Pruden, Executive Minister for Indigenous Ministries and Justice: <https://united-church.ca/news/kamloops-residential-school-time-mourning-and-support>.

Tricia thanked Shannon for her report and for all of her work over the past year.

Discussion: the rural church is struggling, not caused, but exacerbated by COVID; the General Council is aware of this. Congregations are closing; a large number of churches are without the services of ministry personnel; urbanization is also a factor; Communities of Faith are being supported, especially the Lay Leaders; St. Andrew's College is separately incorporated, and the Regional Council doesn't have authority over their decisions; the Association of Theological Schools approves programming for graduates that are to be ordained.

Alan Hall, General Council Executive Minister for Ministry and Employment, began his report by thanking the Regional Council for the invitation and opportunity to be part of this meeting, and for the references to the recent discovery of the 215 unmarked graves of children at the Kamloops Residential School. This shocking and incomprehensible news provides a reminder that we have much to explore and reflect on in our history, and that we have much to do for reconciliation.

Appreciation was expressed for Murray Pruden, new Executive Minister for Indigenous Ministries and Justice, and change that will effect steps towards right relations.

Alan asked for prayers for the new General Secretary, Michael Blair, as he responds to so many issues facing the church at this time.

The 44th General Council (2022) will be a virtual meeting, in three sessions: listening in February, discussion in the spring, and decision-making in the summer session.

The development of a strategic plan for The United Church of Canada is moving forward with input from town halls and consultations. The results will be reported to the General Council Executive in the fall, and then to the 44th General Council in 2022. The plan will address the question: What does the church need to do today to be relevant, and meaningful, effective and faithful 10 years from now?

Comments can be sent to planning@united-church.ca.

A report to the GC Executive is being drafted with recommendations about rural churches, and practices to support those without ministry leadership.

The Office of Vocation is only in its second year, and continues to learn and revise its processes and make improvements to ChurchHub.

Alan encouraged the delegates to support Japhet Ndhlovu, the new Executive Minister for Church in Mission, and expressed appreciation for the academic leadership of John Young, soon to be retiring from the position of Executive Minister for Theological Leadership.

Appreciation was also expressed for the staff, and those in Pastoral Charge leadership, both vocational and lay, for learning new skills and ways to connect during the COVID pandemic. Alan acknowledged that technology is not always available in rural areas, and told the story of one Community of Faith that is distributing weekly rural mail box sermons.

Alan asked that any updates in the work around reviewing the Designated Lay Ministry, Licensed Lay Worship Leaders and Sacramental Elders practices be communicated to him.

At its conclusion, Alan Hall was thanked for his report.

Vicki Nelson, Stewardship Animator for Western Canada, was introduced.

Vicki invited the delegates to consider these questions. What is your Community of Faith's mission? What inspires you to stay involved with your Community of Faith? What inspires new folks when they find you? If money was not object and you had unlimited time to devote to it, what do you dream for your Community of Faith?

Vicki introduced *Called to be the Church: the Journey*, a program for Communities of Faith to intentionally focus on and plan for stewardship. The program is being planned for August, and delegates were invited to contact Vicki directly: vnelson@united-church.ca.

Further questions were considered. When do you ask members of your Community of Faith to give? When was the last time generosity was spoken about as a spiritual practice? How are folks, curious about your Community of Faith, invited in, welcomed and engaged? How do you practice gratitude in our own life? How is generosity within your Community of Faith lifted up and celebrated? How do you feel when you are appropriately seen, acknowledged and thanked? In what ways do you pay that forward?

Vicki reminded the delegates to use *Generosity Matters* and *Minutes for Mission* stories and resources, and that, "living a life full of gratitude takes practice and daily effort, but it is so worth it!"

The Mission and Service video, *Thank you for your Generosity!* was shown. It can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXl6tqlw52w>.

Lydia Gruchy Anniversary

Sandra Beardsall, Professor of Church History and Ecumenics at St. Andrew's College, shared some of her research on Lydia Gruchy, whose 85th Anniversary of Ordination would be celebrated in November, 2021. Lydia Gruchy was the first woman ordained in The United Church of Canada, and in the whole of Canada.

Sandra reflected on Lydia's life, and what it means for the church today. Further details about Lydia Gruchy's life can be found in her biography, [With Love, Lydia: The Story of Canada's First Woman Ordained Minister](#), by Patricia Wotton.

Sandra concluded by leading the delegates in reciting a paraphrase of Psalm 122:

I was glad when they said to me: let us go to the house of God.

And now our feet are standing within your gates, the gates of a city bound firmly together.

The people go up, to give thanks to God: there stand the pillars of justice and peace.

For the sake of my siblings, of my friends, I say: "Peace be with you, city of God!

And I will seek your good, O city. I will seek your Good". Amen.

Tricia Gerhard thanked Sandra Beardsall for her presentation, and congratulated her on her upcoming retirement later in 2021.

Financial Report

Heather Dootoff, Financial Administrator, began by bringing greetings from Donna Brown, Regional Council Treasurer, who was unable to be present.

Heather reported that 2019, as a year of transition, and 2020, with the impact of COVID-19, were not normal spending years, and that 2021 is raising questions about what might be the new normal.

Delegates were referred to the [2020 Financial Statements](#), posted on the Regional Council web site, which show that the operating revenue was over-budget, while expenses were less than budgeted, leaving a net surplus.

Heather reported that virtual meetings were being held between *Edge* and Mission Support-receiving Ministries to find ways to strengthen their funding capacity in the face of diminishing Mission and Service funds.

Delegates were invited to visit <https://livingskiesrc.ca/resources/funding/> to find out about available funding and resources.

Heather concluded her report with a reminder that Community of Faith statistics need to be submitted through ChurchHub.

Music Break: the singing of “The Weight of a Grain of Wheat”, was led by Soon-Gwan Hong, with subtitles of the translation by Yoonjoo Shin (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1r8ISOodXY>).

Nominations Report

Susan Reed, Nominations Committee Convenor, referred the delegates to the [full report](#) in the meeting docket.

Susan offered a word of thanks to those who said “yes” to taking on new roles; to those who considered the possibility even if the answer was “no”; and to all those who have given of their time, energy, gifts and wisdom to the Regional Council.

She advised that the primary role of the Nominations Committee is to fill vacancies, and that currently there were fourteen vacancies; plus members needed for any new committees; plus Pastoral Relations Liaisons. Information about all of these opportunities is posted on the Regional Council web site: <https://livingskiesrc.ca/governance-admin/nominations/>.

There are two processes for nominations: to ask people directly, and to seek submissions through the [Expression of Interest](#) form. At present, only self-nomination is available, so delegates were encouraged to talk to others about the opportunities, referring them to the Expression of Interest form or to contact the Nominations Committee for more information: lsrcnominations@gmail.com.

Susan concluded her report by advising that there were three vacancies on the Nominations Committee, and invited the delegates to consider joining this fun group, which would be more effective with six members rather than the current three.

Commissioners to the 44th General Council (2022)

Susan Reed outlined the process of the Nominations Committee, including considerations of General Council and Regional Council Executive mandated parameters, balances for diversity, living into being intercultural, and including all kinds of people.

It was reported that the Nominations Committee was responsible to produce a slate of nominees for 17 General Council Commissioners and 5-6 Alternate Commissioners, to include:

- 1 Commissioner who is ex-officio, the Chairperson of the Regional Council;
- 1 Youth Commissioner to be chosen by the Youth and Young Adult Community (YAYAC); and

• 15 Commissioners selected from the applications submitted to the Nominations Committee; and Biographies of the nominees for GC Commissioners were not available publicly, but the delegates were assured that the Nominations Committee was very careful in its work to produce the following slate:

- Tricia Gerhard (Ex-Officio), Ordained Minister, Regina
- Youth Commissioner, yet to be named
- Bob Hayes, Layperson, Prince Albert
- Vicki Nelson, Layperson, Regina
- Bill Pollock, Layperson, Saskatoon
- Jeri-Lee Jones, Designated Lay Ministry Student Estevan
- Michelle Rowe, Ordained Minister, Maple Creek
- Beth Johnston, Ordained Minister, Nipawin
- Owen Wright, Layperson, Saskatoon
- Allan Gairns, Diaconal Minister, Rosetown
- SunDo Hyun, Ordained Minister, Meadow Lake
- Frances Kitson, Candidate, Lanigan
- Emily Carr, Ordained Minister in Adm. Process, Saskatoon
- Trina Hodgson, Layperson, Regina;
- Yvonne Terry, Designated Lay Minister Retired, Regina; and
- Jen Dresser, Diaconal Minister, Yorkton.

The Delegates were advised that information would be circulated about the nominations process to find one additional Commissioner, and 5-6 Alternate Commissioners, using the Expressions of Interest form (link above).

It was moved by Susan Reed and seconded by Jeanette Warrian that the above slate of Commissioners be approved by the Living Skies Regional Council. The motion was carried.

The Nominations Committee was thanked for its very important work.

Announcements

Darrell Reine provided information about UCRD's Great Clearance Sale and upcoming opportunities on Zoom.

Delegates were reminded that Westminster United Church, Humboldt, had shared a Sunday service for June 6 (or another time): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZkqjFYbpQ>.

Fundraising for Mission and Service: donations for M & S were invited by e-transfer to livingskies@united-church.ca. The goals are \$3,000 to allow Sandra Beardsall to retire, and \$5,000 so that Daryl Woods might retire in 2022.

It was reported that Westminster United Church, Regina, had donated to the Healing Fund in memory of the children who had died in residential schools.

Charlene Burns, Community Capacity Development Coordinator for Western Canada, Indigenous Ministries and Justice, gave her regrets for the remainder of the meeting.

Tricia Gerhard dismissed the delegates for a lunch break at 11:47 a.m.