

**Living Skies Executive Minutes
March 25, 2021 via Zoom**

Present Tricia Gerhard (Chair), Donna Brown (Treasurer), Ron Brandow, Linda Gunningham, Tim Ellis, Brian Maitland, Eugene Oh, Dave Whalley.

A quorum was present.

Corresponding Members Rob Reed (Convenor), Annette Taylor (Property Commission), Susan Reed (Nominations Committee).

Regrets Cam Fraser.

Staff Present Shannon McCarthy (Executive Minister), Julie Graham (Justice and Communications Minister), Kent Mohn (Youth and Young Adult Minister), Heather Dootoff (Finance Administrator), Bev Diebert (Administrative Support), Jamie McKay (Executive Assistant & Recording Secretary).

Call to Order Tricia Gerhard called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

Opening Worship and Check-In Tricia Gerhard read a reflection and said a prayer.

Approval of Agenda We reviewed the agenda.

037 – 2020/2021 **It was agreed by consensus:
That Living Skies Regional Council Executive accept the agenda as amended.**

Approval of Executive Minutes We reviewed the minutes from January 28, 2021.

038 – 2020/2021 **It was agreed by consensus:
That Living Skies Regional Council Executive accept the minutes from January 28, 2021 as distributed.**

BUSINESS ARISING

Update on Third Avenue United Church, Saskatoon Third Avenue now has ownership of the building. The next step is to have a building condition assessment. The regional council will pay for the initial costs and recoup those costs from Third Avenue United Church.

Correspondence

- Report from Nominations
- Report from Annual Meeting Planning
- Email regarding Third Avenue United Church
- Letter concerning Crown/Treaty Land Sales

**Report from the
Executive Minister**

Shannon McCarthy reported.

Kent Mohn

Kent Mohn has done an amazing and creative job with youth ministry. Kent's contract is up for renewal and can only be renewed one more time before he must move to permanent status.

We agreed to move Kent into a permanent part-time status now instead of renewing his contract one last time.

039 – 2020/2021

It was agreed by consensus:

That Living Skies Regional Council Executive appoint Kent Mohn to a permanent part-time staff position of Living Skies Regional Council of The United Church of Canada, effective April 1, 2021.

General Council 44

General Council 43 met on March 20, 2021 and decided that General Council 44 will be held online. A general agreement was made on the importance of making an online meeting as accessible as possible.

Anti-racism workshops

General Council staff and all staff in the regional councils will have access to anti-racism workshops beginning in April. These workshops are not mandatory and executive ministers in each regional council will determine how their staff will participate. All staff in Living Skies are willing to participate and see the importance of these learning opportunities.

*Third Avenue United
Church*

We have hired Pinchin Ltd., a consulting firm, to do an assessment audit of the Third Avenue building.

STAFF REPORTS

**Justice and
Communications**

Julie Graham reported.

*Conversion Therapy
Discussion
(Appendix A)*

We reviewed a draft letter on a call for a provincial ban on conversion therapy (Appendix A).

We agreed to approve and send the letter as distributed and to add all members of the executive to the letter.

Tricia Gerhard and Julie Graham will decide who to send the letter to, and that we will make a template available for congregational usage.

040 – 2020/2021

It was agreed by consensus:

That Living Skies Regional Council Executive approve and send the letter calling for a provincial ban on conversion therapy, as distributed, and to add the names of all the members of the executive to the letter.

Sign on for the Crown/Treaty land sales

We reviewed a request to support the halt of crown land sales in Saskatchewan.

Tricia Gerhard will send an email to add Living Skies to this request. Julie Graham will create a blurb to add to the newsletter.

041 – 2020/2021

It was agreed by consensus:

That Living Skies Regional Council Executive will add our name in support of the halting of crown land sales in Saskatchewan.

Pastoral Relations

Tracy Murton reported.

Committee on Ministry Personnel Support

A retreat was held last week for ministry personnel which included people from Alberta and Manitoba. There were morning and afternoon workshop sessions with lots of good feedback.

Committee on Community of Faith Support

The pandemic continues to have a big impact on congregations. The lockdown continues which means we now are making our way through a second Holy Week where we are unable to meet in person to worship.

Committee on Lay Leadership Support

We are starting to bring ourselves in alignment with the Manual so we can help ministers who are not in a call or appointment figure out where are their relationships and if they want to continue to do some kind of ministry.

Youth & Young Adult Ministry

Kent Mohn reported.

Potential role for contracted grant writer

Arising out of EDGE Network discussions around sustainability, there has been a fair bit of focus on grants & funding available in the wider secular community (beyond the UCC). Several the Region's current mission-supported ministries may be eligible for some of these grants/funds. The expressed challenges from volunteer leadership are:

- 1) Keeping track of the various secular funding sources & their eligibility requirements
- 2) Writing & submitting the actual grant/funding applications

Is there a potential role for the Region in contracting a professional grant writer? With the support and expertise of the EDGE network, the individual(s) could be responsible for:

- 1) Researching grant/funding availability.
- 2) Writing & submitting grant applications on behalf of LS ministries.

If we considered looking into contracting a professional grant writer, we would need to make sure there was a very strong communication commitment between ministries and the person writing the grants.

FINANCE

A Comparative Income Statement from January 1, 2021 to March 22, 2021 was submitted for information.

The Living Skies audit report is expected to be received soon.

**Incorporated
 Ministries**

There was nothing new to report from incorporated ministries.

REPORTS

Nominations

We reviewed a nominations report submitted by Susan Reed.

Nominations has been doing a great job of promoting all opportunities available and encouraging people to apply for them.

042 – 2020/2021

**It was agreed by consensus:
 That Living Skies Regional Council Executive accepts the recommendation of the
 Living Skies Nominations Committee that JONATHON ZACHARIAS be named as a
 corresponding member of the Living Skies Property Commission.**

*GC commissioners &
 alternates*

Nominations will be appointing 17 commissioners and is seeking input from the executive on the number of alternates they should add.

We agreed that five to six alternates would be enough to fill any spots that arise. Tricia Gerhard will let Susan Reed of the executive's input.

Regional Gathering

Rob Reed reported.

*Monthly education
 sessions*

The regional gathering planning committee has agreed that there will not enough time to hold education and business sessions a regional meeting in June 2021.

Instead, the committee proposes that education sessions be held once a month, each to be hosted by a different community ministry, and open to the whole regional council.

The executive supports this proposal and agrees that since this proposal is tied to the regional meeting, we will ask the planning team to move forward with the next steps.

**Assessment Task
 Group**

The Assessment Task Group continues to meet and is looking for a date to meet with our ministry grant partners in the latter half of April.

The task group suggest providing EDGE grant writing training. We want to be supportive without creating co-dependency. In November, the task group discussed matching people from the executive with the various grant applicant ministries to help build and create relationships.

**Letter from Dwaine
 Dornan**

We reviewed and discussed a letter received from Dwaine Dornan requesting we review the motions from the inaugural regional meeting that led to the regional

assessment. The concern is that the intention of the original motion seems to have been misinterpreted.

During the presentation of the proposal to remove the regional assessment during the 2020 Regional Meeting, it was heard that the funds raised by the extra assessment could only be used for community ministry ministries to explore other sources of funding.

The Executive does not want it to seem as though priorities have shifted in terms of how they interact with community ministries. The original conversations about the regional assessment began as the executive heard from congregations that they couldn't pay for both assessments, or that doing so would create a financial hardship. These discussions changed and affected how the original motion was viewed.

Tricia Gerhard will draft a letter in response to Dwaine Dornan and send to the Executive for input.

Letter from Richard Manley-Tannis

We heard news from Dea. Dr. Richard Manley-Tannis on the changes coming to St. Andrew's College.

We do not have questions about their plan or process as they go through these changes, but we will offer our support to Richard and to all their staff and faculty. We would also like to thank them for their level of communication.

Tricia Gerhard will draft a letter to Richard and send to the Executive for input.

Next Meeting

The Executive agreed to meet on the fourth Thursday of each month from 1:00-3:00 PM via Zoom with the next meeting date(s):

- April 22, 2021

Blessing & Adjournment

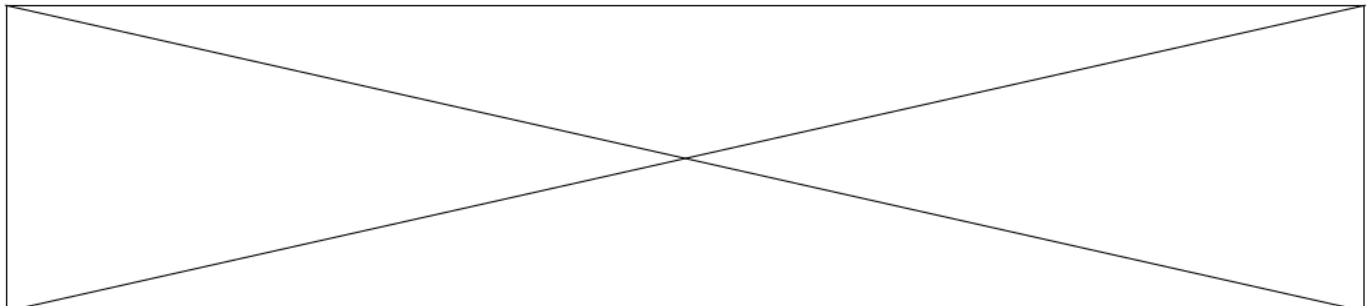
Tricia Gerhard said a prayer and adjourned the meeting at 3:15 PM.



Tricia Gerhard, Chairperson



Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister





The United Church of Canada

Living Skies Regional Council

60A Athabasca St. E.
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Call for a provincial ban on conversion therapy

From: Living Skies Regional Council of The United Church of Canada,
Rev Tricia Gerhard, chairperson.

To: Hon Scott Moe, Premier; Hon Paul Merriman, Health Minister; Hon Gordon Wyant,
Attorney General; Hon Everett Hindley, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.
CC: Leader of the Opposition; Human Rights Critic

Dear Premier Moe, Minister Merriman, Minister Wyant, and Minister Hindley,

We write to you as representatives of The United Church of Canada within Living Skies Regional Council, which comprises 215 Communities of Faith and over 20 additional ministries or shared partnerships within the province of Saskatchewan.

Living Skies Regional Council of the United Church of Canada, acting on a motion to its membership that passed with over 95% approval in November 2020, **calls upon the Government of Saskatchewan to:**

- a) Enact legislation banning “conversion therapy” for people of all ages in Saskatchewan, thus making it illegal for individuals or entities to engage in the practice of conversion therapy or to refer an individual to practitioners of conversion or reparative therapy;
- b) Include conversion therapy and bans on it in the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code;
- c) Ban health coverage for conversion practices.
- d) Ensure that the Government of Saskatchewan does not provide grants or contracts to any entity that engages in or refers individuals to practitioners of conversion or reparative therapy.
- e) Make a public statement against conversion therapy.

Our faith belief

Living Skies Regional Council stands against the harmful practice of conversion or reparative therapy for LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit persons in Canada. Such practices are hostile to a person’s identity, an affront to their dignity, and an assault on their well-being.

Many conversion therapy proponents use the Christian faith and specific interpretations of our scriptures to argue that only heterosexual and cisgender identities and expressions are acceptable to God and to the Christian tradition. We disagree.

It is the belief of The United Church of Canada that our faith tradition affirms the dignity of all people, including people across the LGBTQ2SIA+ spectrum. We believe that LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit people are an expression of God's diverse creation, and share with cisgender and heterosexual people an equal place in God's love. We recognize that members of the LGBTQ2SIA+ communities continue to disproportionately experience marginalization, family estrangement, violence, and exclusion in a predominantly heterosexual and gender-binary culture. Knowing that our Christian tradition has been used to cause great harm, we commit to making amends, and to challenging these beliefs.

Our view on conversion therapy

Conversion therapy¹ seeks to change core elements of individuals by attempting to change, suppress, eliminate or deny their sexual orientation, and/or their gender identity or gender expression. The United Church of Canada, both nationally and regionally, does not support this dangerous and abusive practice.

There is no credible research to support the discredited and dangerous idea that anything can change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Rather, what research does tell us is that these so-called change efforts frequently have devastating impacts on their survivors, including increased anxiety, depression, self hatred, compromised mental health, post traumatic stress disorder, suicide or suicidal thoughts, and many other negative and lifelong psychological, spiritual, and social impacts.

Our call to the government

We call on the government of Saskatchewan to do its part, within its powers and responsibilities, to ensure the equality and human rights of all communities and residents. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2018 (page 5) names sex, sexual orientation and gender identity as among the prohibited grounds of discrimination. Conversion therapy is a profoundly discriminatory act. It is seriously harmful to individuals and is opposed by the Canadian Psychological Association, the World Health Organization, the American Psychiatric Association and others; and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child indicates that children should not be discriminated against based on what gender they identify with.

Provincial action in Saskatchewan to combat conversion therapy would follow in the footsteps of many other jurisdictions in Canada that have taken similar action. Conversion therapy bans at a provincial, territorial and municipal level are a common and important tool for ensuring the safety and freedom of LGBTQ2SIA+ communities.

Provinces and territories that already have, or are in the process of developing, their own legislation include the Yukon, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI. In addition, we have seen communities across Canada take this issue up by introducing municipal bans through bylaws, policies, or declarations.

These include the communities of Vancouver, Wood Buffalo, St. Albert, Edmonton, Spruce Grove, Beaumont, Strathcona County, Rocky Mountain House, Calgary, Strathmore, Lethbridge, Saskatoon, Montreal, and Saint John. Canadians from coast to coast to coast are united in

ending these abusive practices, and they have continued to show their support for leaders who have committed to doing so.

Therefore, Living Skies Regional Council and its members look forward to hearing the response of the Government of Saskatchewan to our call for a province-wide ban on conversion or reparative therapy. We thank you for your attention to this crucial matter, and would be honoured to be in further conversation with the government.

Sincerely,

Rev. Tricia Gerhard
Chairperson, Living Skies Regional Council
of The United Church of Canada