

10 March 2022

Dear Members of Living Skies Regional Council,

Warm greetings to you during these first days of March. I know many of you are beginning to think about the arrival of Spring and our faith journey through Lent and Easter. Some of you might even be thinking about the Regional Council Annual Gathering. I know there have been some questions floating around about the gathering and if it is happening, so I wanted to give you an update.

Unfortunately, there will be NO gathering this year, not online or in person. There are a variety of factors that have led us to this decision. At the top of our minds is the pandemic. No one knows what the pandemic status will be in May. The likelihood is high that the annual gathering would be online only. Another factor influencing our decision is the position of Convenor of the Regional Council Gathering is still vacant. This impacts the planning and the running of the meeting, among other things. Taking these and other factors into consideration— lack of volunteers, Zoom exhaustion – led us to decide to not hold a meeting this year. The Executive will do the work that needs to be done in lieu of a gathering.

Hopefully, your community of faith has elected or will elect a lay Region Council Delegate(s) at your most recent annual meeting. If not, the existing lay delegate(s) remain in place until your annual meeting is held. The important thing to remember is that even if there is no Regional Council gathering, the delegates continue to have the very important role in communicating and connecting between your Community of Faith and the Regional Council through the year. Communication can happen in several ways, but the best ways are to ensure contact information is up to date with the Regional Council and to subscribe to the Regional Rambler.

While I know it is disappointing that we won't be gathering this year, there will be opportunities to be together in the future. The Affirming Task Group will be offering some events to bring us together as we journey towards being an Affirming Region. There will be other things along the way that will get us together, I am sure.

One other piece I'd like to share with you concerns future Regional Council Gatherings. A few months ago, the presiding officers of Northern Spirit and Prairie to Pine Regional Councils, and I met with Shannon McCarthy to have a conversation about how the annual Gatherings might look going forward. In this discussion we took several things into consideration: planning, finances and most importantly, the demand these meetings have on our Regional Staff, particularly the shared staff. From this conversation the following plan was established: in a three-year rotation, each Regional Council would have one in-person gathering and two remote gatherings.

The in-person meetings would be staggered in such a way that there would be only one in-person gathering each year. For 2023 it was decided that all three regions would have an in-person gathering since most of us haven't gathered together since 2019. Going forward, Living Skies will have an in-person gathering in 2024 and then have remote meetings in 2025 and 2026. We are hoping that this pattern will allow for Regions to have the financial resources and staff resources available to offer a strong in-person gathering in terms of building community, offering learning, sharing in worship, and doing the work of the church.

If you have questions about any of this information, please feel free to contact me at lsrcexecutive@gmail.com

Blessings to you,

Tricia (Rev Tricia Gerhard, chair, Living Skies Regional Council)