

## Living Skies Regional Council Tea Party

June 9, 2022 on Zoom



At 7:02pm on the evening of Thursday, June 9, Tracy Murton, Pastoral Relations Minister for Living Skies Regional Council welcomed about 40 people to the Regional Council Tea Party. The session is to celebrate our honourees for 2022 and to say farewell to our outgoing Regional Council Chairperson, Tricia Gerhard. She reminded folks to have their tea cups and dainties (the eating kind) handy or, if it were better for some, to just to be in community with us. She turned the gathering over to Tricia Gerhard for one last time.

Tricia then opened the evening with a prayer by Kay Fowler, from her book - *Good Enough – A Magic Moment*. Julie Graham, Regional Minister for Justice and Communications then spoke a land acknowledgement that was created in a workshop with Dr. Rose Roberts and Dr. Stryker Calvez. During that workshop, participants were told, Land Acknowledgments should be different every time. In her land acknowledgement, Julie included all the treaties that are in Living Skies Regional Council / Saskatchewan. She then explained, in those treaties, it says the land was ceded, but First Nation groups say that was not what was agreed to – how can you cede land that belongs to the creator. Julie then challenged every Community of Faith to do a land acknowledgement, no matter how difficult. Lastly, she explained that the close captioning was turned on for this meeting, and gave instructions on how to turn it off.

Tricia returned to the speaker position to give an update about the upcoming Regional Gatherings. 2023 will be in person, but the location has yet to be determined, and the 2024 meeting will also be in person at Humboldt. Following that meeting, there will be 2 on-line meetings (2025 and 2026) while the other 2 Regional Councils, with in our tri-regional configuration, have their in-person meetings. This will set the pattern for regional council meetings within the tri-region structure under Shannon McCarthy's leadership.

Next to speak was Susan Reed, Chair of the Nominations Committee. She thanked organizers for the opportunity to speak. She referred to her two reports that have been submitted to the Docket / Annual Reports. The first is her written report ([found in Section C](#)). The second is the slate or list of nominees for the positions on commissions, committees, task groups or other positions that are vacant ([Section I](#)). She said there are 71 spots on the slate and only 49 names, leaving 22 vacancies. She added there are also several vacancies within the Pastoral Relations structure - for Pastoral Charge Supervisors, Liaisons and more. She asked participants to read through the list of opportunities and consider if they, or someone they know, might be a good fit for a vacant position. The committee also has slides that can be shown or used in pre-service announcements or Community of Faith bulletins. Susan added, you don't have to be a Regional Council member or a representative from your Community of Faith to volunteer. She highlighted an immediate need for folks to work on the Annual Meeting Planning

Committee. They will coordinate the planning of the details for the upcoming meetings. Open positions on that committee include chair, secretary and 2 to 3 members. The position of Convenor for the Regional Gathering (a one-year term) is also vacant. If you or someone you know might be interested in these or any other positions, please contact anyone on the Nominations committee or Susan, directly. Susan can be reached by phone at 306-482-3932 or by text at 306-482-8858. You can also send an email to [lsrcnominations@gmail.com](mailto:lsrcnominations@gmail.com). Chair Tricia asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, she turned the meeting over to Shannon McCarthy, Regional Council Executive Minister.

Shannon began by thanking Tricia for service on the Executive. She then introduced herself and explained about the Tri-Region (Prairie to Pine, Living Skies and Northern Spirit Regional Councils). She then gave some information about General Council 44: it is still meeting and will be the longest in history and it is also fully on-line. So far, they have had all the learning sessions, but will soon be moving into the discussion sessions. If interested, you can get the You Tube link from Shannon, so you can listen to the discussions that will begin on June 17<sup>th</sup> at 11am. The decision-making sessions will take place from July 21<sup>st</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>. She explained that the proposals that were received, may not be the proposals that are voted on. During the discussion sessions, proposals may be revised and/or refined before being voted upon. So far, there is only one nominee for Moderator - Carmen Lansdown. June 17 is the closing date for nominations for the Moderator. To see biographies of the candidate(s) for Moderator and other General Council 44 news and updates, please go to the website:

<https://generalcouncil44.ca/>

Shannon then spoke about the Strategic Planning being done. Some folks here tonight may have participated in the town hall meetings held near the end of April. For more information about this, see the information on the General Council website: <https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/welcome-united-church-canada/our-call-and-our-vision>. It is hoped this call and vision will become tools for regional councils and communities of faith to use.

The meeting was then turned over to Tracy Murton. Tracy asked us to imagine that we had just finished a fine (filling) supper and we were sitting with the other folks from the gathering in the usual metal chairs. She then introduced each of the retirees who wanted to speak.

**Vicki Obedkoff** – was coming to us from Ontario where she was visiting family and friends. She spoke of how she missed the old Local Global Advocacy network, who worked on issues like uranium, peace and justice in Palestine as well as indigenous issues. She talked of what a good time she had in Saskatchewan, even though the church she served, St. Thomas-Wesley in Saskatoon, has closed. She doesn't know what the future holds, but it will be a pleasure to be in Saskatchewan to find out. She acknowledged she did miss in-person endings.

**Miles Russell** – completed 39 years in the same place. He asked, what do I say? First, he thanked his family: Anna and sons, Joel with Amy and grandson Elliot in England and William

and partner Spencer in Halifax, who they intend to visit over the next few months. He also expressed gratitude to the pastoral charge and the people of the wider church who he worked with. He talked about his first week of ministry and how busy it was, and that it really never slowed down. He also spoke about what he learned: rural ministry is always changing; ministry is a gift: hard, stressful and life-changing; you never know who your words will affect; and it is simple, but profound. In his final words, he offered that after a good rest, he will be willing to work in the church structure again.

**Laura Sundberg** – used to despise retirement, but now she is realizing it's not that bad. She expressed her gratitude for the 29 years she spent in Saskatchewan and for the connections to the wide church and for all the learning at presbytery meetings and Conferences. She found her work on Education and Students fulfilling as she was excited to see how those people grew. She was grateful for Children at Conference, who taught her daughter many lessons – directly and indirectly. She, too said, after a good rest, she will be ready to get back to work.

**Daryl Woods** – was not allowed to speak the year he was ordained, so is grateful for the opportunity to speak tonight. He started off by thanking Nola and his daughters for their help over the years. He also joked he had been around so long, that he preached at Miles Russell's covenanting service. He thanked all those who he had connected with throughout the province over the years and for the changes that had taken place. His first ministry change was going from the body shop to the pulpit in one week. He remembered many powerful moments from over the years, like a experience, told by Karen Ridd, about a prisoner who saw hope in a single blade of grass. We suggested we need to recognize the miracles in our pastoral charges – day-to-day miracles. He remembered Dale Morrison speaking at a presbytery meeting. He had everyone stand in a circle and hold hands. He then said: "These are your brothers and sisters in Christ". It was a very powerful moment. He thanked those gathered for the opportunities to serve and added what a blessing it is to be in ministry in Saskatchewan.

Tracy then thanked the retirees for their speeches and reminded those in attendance that each retiree had a submission in the Biography section of the [Docket / Annual Report](#) that folks should read when they have an opportunity. Tracy then turned the meeting back over to Tricia.

Tricia introduced the In Memorium portion of the evening. The congregations that ceased worshipping over the last year or will cease soon are: St. Andrew's United Church of the Balcarres Pastoral Charge; Penzance congregation of the Craik Pastoral Charge; Robert Hill Mission, part of the Hudson Bay Larger Parish; Lashburn: St. James United Church (Pastoral Charge); St. Thomas-Wesley United Church in Saskatoon; Shellbrook Leask: Knox United Church (Pastoral Charge); Tompkins Pastoral Charge and Wiseton United Church of the Prairie Spirit Pastoral Charge.

We also honoured those from Living Skies who died since we last met electronically. They are: Marjorie Kent, Dawna Schrag, daughter of Ken and Eleanor Schrag, Gordon Jardine, Laura Thomson, Don Milne, Diane Schmidt, Shelby Kinrade, Mary Sutton, Jack Carr. We also

honoured Don Laing who served in Saskatchewan for many years before moving to Ontario several years after his retirement and Bill Corkum, who also served in Saskatchewan for many years before moving to Manitoba.

Tricia offered a prayer of thanks for the communities of faith who had served the church, but were now ceasing to worship and for those from our regional council who had died over the last year. She gave thanks for the service of the eleven retirees.

Tracy then referred the gathered to the ordinand, YoungJin Park (also in the biography section). YoungJin was ordained on May 29 in Esterhazy, where he will now be serving. She then added there will be another Service of Celebration in the fall, with the details for that service still to come. She then invited Darrell Reine, our Chair-Elect of the Regional Council to come forward. He offered his thanks to Tricia for her work on behalf of Living Skies Regional Council – leading us through the change into the new structure of the Regional Council, through COVID, and the anxiety and stress associated with that, all while doing her own full-time job. He acknowledged that her work has been very appreciated and by many people. Tricia responded with her thanks.

At 8:53, Darrell Reine closed the meeting with prayer.