

**Living Skies Property Commission
July 14, 2023**

Present	Annette Taylor (chair), Daryl Woods, George Thurlow, Jonathon Zacharias and Bev Kostichuk (secretary)
Staff Present	Heather Dootoff
Call to order	Annette called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.
Check-in & Worship	We checked in. George led worship with a prayer.
Agenda 010-2023/2024	It was agreed by consensus: That the agenda be approved as amended.
Minutes 011-2023/2024	It was agreed by consensus that the minutes of June 9, 2023, be approved as circulated.
Business Arising:	
Letter to GC re: assessments	No response from Erik Mathiesen. Annette will contact Erik again.
Correspondence	None
Property Decisions:	
Strasbourg UC Sale 012-2023/2024	<p>It was agreed by consensus that Living Skies Regional Council Property Commission approve the request from the Trustees of Strasbourg United Church, a congregation of The United Church of Canada at Strasbourg, SK for the sale of a congregational property known as Strasbourg United Church with the legal description of Lot 9-Blk/Par 14-Plan N2596 Ext 0 (surface regular) Parcel number 110362878 , Lot 9-Blk/Par 14-Plan N2596 Ext 0 (Mineral) Parcel number 136220880 and Lot 10-Blk/Par 14-Plan N2596 Ext 0 (Surface regular) Parcel number 110363015 and the municipal address of 300 Pearson Avenue Strasbourg , Saskatchewan pursuant to an agreement dated the 8th day of June between the Trustees of Strasbourg United Church, as seller and Strasbourg Tiny Tots and Helping Hands Daycare Inc., as buyer with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sale price of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to be paid on or before the date of possession, September 1, 2023 • Strasbourg United Church can use the sanctuary rent free for Sunday services until June 30, 2025 <p>The proceeds of the sale will be used for the ongoing work and ministry of Strasbourg United Church.</p>
Carrot River Arborfield PC Sale of Moose Range Property	It was agreed by consensus that Living Skies Regional Council Property Commission approve the request from the Trustees of Carrot River Arborfield Pastoral Charge, a pastoral charge of The United Church of Canada at Carrot River, SK for the sale of a

013-2023/2024	<p>congregational property with the legal description of Lot 7-Blk/Par 1-Plan CH2191 Ext 0 which is located in the RM of Moose Range No.486 according to an agreement dated July 11, 2023 between the Trustees of Carrot River Arborfield Pastoral Charge, as seller and William Derksen and Katherina Derksen, as buyer with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sale price of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) with payment on or before the closing date of July 31, 2023 • The transfer and the cost of transfer are the responsibility of the buyer. <p>The proceeds of the sale will be given to the Mission and Service Fund, United Church of Canada</p>
Listing of McCord Manse, Grasslands PC 014-2023/2024	<p>It was agreed by consensus that Living Skies Regional Council Property Commission approve the request from the Trustees of Grasslands Pastoral Charge, a pastoral charge of The United Church of Canada at McCord, SK for the listing by tender of a congregational property commonly known as Grasslands Manse with the legal description of Lot 6 Blk 10 Plan 62SC03354 Ext 0 Parcel 1422484494 and municipal address of 229 Centre Street, McCord, SK with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No set asking price. • To be advertised in the Assiniboia, Gravelbourg and Swift Current papers, on social media and with posters. • Possession date in the early fall 2023 depending on the date of an agreement for sale.
Abandoned Properties	
RM of Maple Creek property 015-2023/2024	<p>It was agreed by consensus that Living Skies Regional Council Property Commission request permission from the Trustees of Living Skies Regional Council for the sale of a Methodist property with the legal description of Blk/Par A-Plan 101632801 Ext 1 Title 123423791 in the RM of Maple Creek No. 111 according to an agreement between the Trustees of Living Skies Regional Council as seller and Shane Goldie of Taber, AB as buyer with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sale price of five hundred dollars (\$500) • Living Skies Regional Council Property Commission will complete the transfer
Policies/Procedures	
Requests to disbanded congregations	The Manual is clear that property of disbanded congregations belongs to the Region.

	We recommend that the Region develop a policy related to the distribution of bequests. Annette will contact the LSRC Executive regarding this recommendation.
Other Business	
Pelly United Church	Pelly UC plans to sell church and disband- Liaison- Daryl
Penzance UC	A resident of Penzance is very upset about the sale of the church. The Penzance trustees are aware of this person's concerns. Annette spoke with this person and informed them that any concerns about the regional council's actions in this matter should be sent in writing. So far nothing has been received.
Saskatoon St David's Trinity	This congregation wants to update the name of the congregation and trustees on the title of the property. Annette emailed them explaining that this was an expensive and unnecessary transfer and has not yet received a reply.
Edam UC	Rev Kun Kim's term of ministry has been extended to June 30, 2024, so no action will be taken on the sale of the manse at this time. Edam congregation has ceased regular worship and they can no longer afford their allocation to the pastoral charge so would like to leave. Bev has talked to two trustees about the future of the church building. They indicate that the congregation would like to have it maintained as a community centre. They have different ideas on how this would happen: one indicates that they should transfer it to the village, the other indicates that they should remain as a congregation and operate it themselves. Bev has forwarded this information to Tracy recommending that a congregational meeting be held to make decisions on this property. Bev will make it clear to the trustees that they act on behalf of the congregation and follow the instructions of the congregation related to property decisions. The trustees have the Trustees Handbook. The Commission will not have further involvement at this time but will advise the pastoral charge and congregation to contact us when they begin to consider property decisions. Information gathered to date will be place in Team.
Knox-Met UC	We will maintain this congregation on our list but await further information from them.
Quarterly report to Exec	Commission to review and send any comments to Annette
Pemoco offer	Pemoco has made an offer which expires tomorrow. George will organize a meeting of the St. Andrew's/Commission oil committee.
Property held by inactive congregations	What are the requirements for a congregation to continue? What action should the region take on church buildings still used but that are not in good operating condition- no bathroom, no water, no heat? What about congregations that do not meet for worship? George will circulate information that Prairie Pine Presbytery prepared on this.

	By the time the Commission becomes involved many congregations are very inactive with very few people active, should some steps be taken sooner? Annette will talk with Tracy Murton to find out if the Committee on Support of Communities of Faith has discussed these questions.
National Consultation on Property	This consultation was held electronically on June 13, 2023. Annette, George and Shannon attended. George provided a report from the consultation, attached as appendix A. George was disappointed in the process that was used and that he is going to ask for 1) an inventory of resources (e.g., architects, realtors, lawyers, etc.) and 2) the formation of a small group interested in working with cemeteries.
Adjournment	Annette adjourned the meeting at 11:35 a.m.
Upcoming meetings	Next meeting: Zoom meeting at 9:30 a.m. on August 18, 2023 Daryl will lead devotion.

Appendix A - Report from George Thurlow re: National Property Consultation

I was disappointed by the consultation. It was organized by staff of one or more regional councils in Ontario. They want to “move forward in developing supportive tools and best practices regarding property within the United Church of Canada”. They are “also conducting a simple comparative analysis of regional property policies and well as a survey of current property management capacity within United Church of Canada affiliated organizations.” I had expected some of that in the context of the meeting. Instead they asked:

1. What one next step together would you find most helpful?
2. What one question do you have following the consultation?
3. What one tool, in your estimation, is or would be most helpful in supporting communities of faith to address property considerations?

I did not learn anything new. My previous western redneck biases of

1. they are dealing with big churches and we are dealing with both ongoing rural depopulation as well as the decline of the United Church
2. They have no clue of our geography talking of amalgamations between Communities of Faith 30 km apart [we did that in 1925]
3. Listening politely but lost when I suggested reaching across denominational lines to gain bodies for the pews

were confirmed.

I also noted the same Pastoral Relations discussions using up time which I encountered in F+A meetings of Saskatchewan Conference.

One of my criticisms is that they should have given us the process in the initiation so one could choose areas and prepare questions or comments in an orderly fashion. They had 4 break out areas with a topic each. We were to spend 20 minutes with each and move to the next. Their hope was we would encounter new people. Annette and I both found a group of us moved in unison so she and I never encountered each other and about 1/2 of the people 5 to 8 people in my groups were the same all through. Of the 25 of us 8 were facilitators and another 1/3rd were staff or representatives from some group. The volunteers knew little of process and staff were too deferential. I was disappointed that the non staff participants lacked an understanding of their Region's policies and process. (editorial note from Annette: I encountered a couple of knowledgeable lay people, but also noticed the high percentage of staff).

Annette noted in a session that various regions have various structures. One has a Communities of Faith Support Commission which contains a Property committee. That makes property work slower and more cumbersome [realtors are impatient] but may help achieve the intervention before the Community of Faith is on life support

While I learned little during the consultation; thinking while I prepared to discuss this with Annette and then report to the Commission [while I mowed my lawn and picked strawberries] made me re-evaluate my approach and resolve to place a plan before us. In looking at a list of what Living Skies Regional Council Communities of Faith had sold to assist St Walburg figure out a value I saw how much we've done in 4+ years To that end I did my chart of various church buildings in Living Skies Region It is not exact but relative so feel free to move a few on the margins.

In 2019 we set up some policies [more and better than some other Regions] and then had to react to the work which 7 Presbyteries had not finished and the surge of requests once we were open for business. Most were E's and F's although 3rd Ave and St Thomas Wesley were "A"s for which we were unprepared. Add to this the list of several hundred properties we got from Bill Doyle's searches. The abandoned properties were mostly F, G and H. We had to be proactive on these. Those did not need a realtor as 7% of \$500 = \$35. The easy work in that area is done. We are down to 4 buildings not associated with Cemeteries 9 with. I must start on a round of cemetery oversight this winter.

- Now with Minto and Wesley I can see another round of A B, and C Churches wanting permission. We are behind Central Canada since rural depopulation which has hurt rural Saskatchewan for the last 80 years [it was only just over 10 years ago Saskatchewan got back over a million people where we were in 1940]. actually helped the cities as people moved in and went to church. Now general decline and a shortage of clergy even for cities is leading even urban Communities of Faith to disband. We do not have a lot of A [8], B[12], and C [counting] churches but that is where the money is. So far we have been lucky to sell to other denominations
- Zion as sold to the Lutherans for expansion space for their Eden Care community/nursing home.
- Whitmore Park was sold to Baptists for a church.
- Rosemont was sold to a charismatic Anglican congregation , under the Bishop of Nigeria (believe it or not!)

- St Thomas Wesley in Saskatoon was sold to the Eritrean community for church and community space
- 3rd ave Saskatoon, Ukrainian Orthodo
- 2nd street Unitarian

The big churches are not only a challenge to sell [they are not a house so need a commercial realtor] but even maintain. Saskatchewan does not have a lot of stone masons or bricklayers and steam fitters are busy in the oil fields. Lay members of the Communities of Faith used to be able to repair 2x4 churches F, G H on a DIY basis although climbing on roofs is not for 70+

I like the idea that Communities of Faith should check with Kindred Works as a precondition. We should consider that for A, B. And C churches. I wonder if KW is only doing housing. I would think that as they get some projects off the ground they could move on.

If we are committed to the principles of a Green world ie. reuse recycle etc I would like someone or entity to help brainstorm or vision on alternate uses for buildings. I did a bit of that in the days of Prairie Pine Presbytery by at least telling people what others had done [see my list of “churches we have sold”]. That works for little 2x4 churches class F, G, +H which become houses or small businesses

Reply to evaluation

I intend to answer that a lot of steps are needed including a meeting doing comparisons in a structured fashion.

My one question was what did we accomplish in 3 hours?

The tool I want is an index of resources The Manuals pre 2013 recommended Finance and Property committees have people knowledgeable in such matters. Good Luck. We struggle to get anyone.

I would most like an inventory of resources ie

1. Architects and engineers
2. Realtors knowledgeable in commercial realty both sales and leases
3. Lawyers who know construction, demolition, leases etc,
4. Lobbyists skilled in sorting out zoning grants etc

I would also like a smaller group on cemeteries. I recognize the Saskatchewan act is not like Ontario’s since they have for-profit cemeteries and fly by night operators but some ideas on encouraging government takeover and to review my checklist