



The Common-tater

This spud's for you

Volume 3

LIVING SKIES REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING NEWS

Issue 2

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LSRC Finance Report

Heather Dootoff – Regional Financial Administrator

Dale Worrall – Treasurer

Dale and Heather explained the LSRC Income Statement for 2022 and 2023 and the Budget for 2024. Our Revenue and Expenses can be divided into two main areas: Governance and Mission & Ministry. Governance includes administrative staff salaries, office costs, staff travel and the annual meeting. In 2022 and 2023 we had surplus Governance Income (over \$100,000 each year), but with reduced salary grants and increasing expenses we are budgeting only a small surplus of \$3,764 in 2024. This surplus is possible only because of the reduction in staff that took place in 2019 when the new structure came into being.

Mission & Ministry includes the salaries of our program staff, mission support grants and the costs of meetings and events. Over the past few years, we have consistently been running a deficit in our Mission & Ministry budget. In 2022 and 2023 this deficit was covered by the surplus in Governance Income, but in 2024 we are budgeting a total loss of \$134,000. We do have some surplus income from previous years to cover this loss for 2024, but this is not a solution that can be continued into the future.

Dale and Heather also explained the Schedule of Funds. The total amount is \$2,794,256, but there is only about \$1,000,000 that is not restricted in use. In fact, \$806,695 is being held for the use of the Indigenous Church. It is important to note that some of these funds are there to provide grants for education, youth and other purposes. Please go to the Regional Council website to learn more about these grants.

Service of Praise

will be held at 10:00AM at Knox United Church (838 /Spadina Cres. E.). Moderator Rt Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne will be the preacher for this special service. Join us for this service of celebration, followed by a reception.

GCE Report

Vicki Nelson – Community of Faith Stewardship Support Staff Vicki announced that as of 1:40p.m. on Friday we had raised \$2100 for the Mission & Service Challenge. We are hoping to reach our goal of \$5000 so we can watch a theological debate on Saturday between Moderator Carmen Lansdowne and Former Moderator Jordan Cantwell.

Diane Bosman – Program Coordinator for Member Engagement Diane assured as she has the best job at General Council! She talks to people every day who want to offer more of their time and talent to their church. There are over 400 appointments in various committees across the General Council. She recognized and thanked the people in our regional council who have been, or currently are, members of these committees. She described the broad diversity amongst the volunteers and identified the need for more lay people in these roles.

Jennifer Janzen-Ball – Executive Minister, Theology and Ministry Leadership Jennifer assured us that the national church is aware of the great number of congregations that are without ministry personnel in our regional council and across the church. The General Council have some pilot projects in place regarding cooperative ministries. Cooperative ministries offer us ways to share our gifts and talents with each other for the common good. Our theological schools are also exploring ways to work cooperatively.

Cameron Fraser – Director of Growth and Ministry Development Cam used an 8.5 X 11 inch piece of paper and a pair of scissors to demonstrate the importance of realizing the potential inside of each of us and within our congregations.

We were also reminded that Docket contains a full GCE Report from The UCC General Secretary, Michael Blair.

Result of 2024 Proposals vote:

1. Crisis in Palestine – Proposal CARRIED
2. Anti-poverty – Proposal CARRIED
3. Church growth – Proposal (Referred to Living Skies Regional Council) CARRIED
4. Church improvement – Proposal (take no action) CARRIED
5. Congregational government – Proposal (take no action) CARRIED
6. Question of ordination/ commissioning/ recognition – Proposal (take on action) DEFEATED; Referred to Living Skies Regional Council Executive CARRIED

DID YOU KNOW: The Common-taters, and the full docket and the worship materials are on the Regional Council website: www.livingskiesrc.ca.





**Workshop: “Growing Gratitude and Generosity”
by Vicki Nelson**

The primary purpose of stewardship formation is to nurture individual and communal identity as stewards and disciples, rather than as consumers. It requires hope through goals (ability to set realistic goals), a plan (ability to figure out how to achieve those goals), and belief (that success if possible). The stewardship three-step process:
1. Inspire –Figure out what makes you world class and focus on that. Tell the stories of what you really do well.
2. Invite – Hospitality and belonging. Make it easy to give. 3. Gratitude – what are you thankful for today?
There are many ways to express thanks.
“The greatest joy in all of living is the joy that comes from freely giving.” Check out “The Giving Program” and “The Journey” from *Called to Be the Church*, as well as worship resources from the UCRD and courses offered by Vicki (vnelson@united-church.ca). We lead with our purpose/ mission, collaboration and taking care of ourselves and each other.

The Flourishing Workshop—morning session

Saturday morning began with energy and buzz as people arrived eager to take part in The Flourishing Workshop with our Moderator Rt.Rev.Dr.Carmen Lansdowne.

Hope was the jumping off point where moderator Carmen shared that hope is productive. It is more than wishful thinking. Hope inspires bold ideas, strengthens social fabric and belonging, creates a sense of purpose and is a catalyst for daring connections.

She shared that this workshop was not an answer to how we will fix the church but an opportunity to make space for us to dream.

Cam Fraser (lapsed football star) offered the wisdom that we must look ahead, taking note of obstacles, so that we might navigate them more effectively recognizing that change is possible.

Jordan Cantwell (Worm Saviour) reminded us of the importance of Jesus in discerning the path the lies ahead. We can do this trusting that God has a plan for the United Church of Canada and that this faith is a gift that is meant to be shared honestly openly and respectfully.

We spent time learning some brain science: It is hard to be creative when we are under threat and We live moving above and below that line.

When we’re above the line we are feeling open, curious, and committed to learning. We have humour, play, and are able to question our beliefs. When we are below the line we feel defensive and closed. We feel there isn’t enough time money or space. We complain and feel overwhelmed.

The hard truth is we are hardwired to go below the line. It’s a survival tactic as our brains can’t tell the difference between a lion at the door and financial stress. But just by acknowledging that we’re below the line helps to move us above the line.

Then we can start to imagine unimaginable solutions to the problems we face. To help see this we played “Turn the World Upside down” and discovered that many things we think can’t possibly exist are very much out in the world.

The Great Mod-Debate!

The Very Rev. Jordan Cantwell and The Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne are facing off for a theological debate on whether AI that has gained self-awareness can be ordained or commissioned within the United Church of Canada. Jennifer Janzen-Ball and Cam Fraser moderated the CBC Debaters-style comedy-debate. It was full of fact and funny. Jordan is arguing in support of AI. Leading with the strong case that as an Affirming Region, we should recognize self-hood of all, including to AI. Jordan also used Carmen’s own words to underline her point. She ended with a quote from the Song of Faith—“All Creation is Good!”
Carmen argued against this, noting that AI doesn’t have compassion, empathy or discernment. Can an algorithm provide care and support for people in our Church? She made a strong point that we need to see each other as sacramental and visible signs of God’s grace...not invisible. After a ton of great points (and jokes), the audience decided that we aren’t ready to have AI ordained or commissioned into the United Church of Canada. The real winner was Mission and Service. Over \$5,000 was donated to support it’s important work across our church.

The Flourishing with Right Rev. Carmen Lansdowne

Much of the United Church gathering on Saturday was centered around growth in the church, not only numerically but spiritually. Rev. Carmen delivered a stunning presentation on how the church can continue to grow and flourish in which she discussed the details of creativity and what is “above the line” and remaining open to new ideas and to change with in the church. While the brain has the capability to remain open and creative we have a tendency to become defensive and focused on our desire to be right. This state of being, defensive and set in ones ways, is what is called being “below the link”, which is completely natural and how our brain is hardwired to exist, but is unhelpful when trying to grow. Where as when one is “above the line” they are able to see the humor of all things from a distance and think creatively and with growth and innovation at the front of their mind while thinking. The importance of remaining about the line especially when trying to grow the church is emphasized by Rev. Carmen and with good reason. A book that she referenced much during this presentation is entitled **Imagineable by Jane McGonigal**. This book focuses on the power of creative problem solving and is excellent in describing the best strategies for navigating the uncertain waters of church growth.

Flourishing workshop—afternoon session

Workshop leader Carmen Lansdowne encouraged us to establish a future mindset, beginning with ‘baseline’ questions:
1. Will things go on the same or become dramatically different?
2. Your future life, mostly worried or mostly optimistic?
3. How much control do you have in life—almost none or completely all? We looked at three models of flourishing, one of which was wholistic and dynamic (Raworth, 2017). We spent time in group discussion envisioning what flourishing would look like, then personally reflecting on “why flourish”.
We should live not just *next* to each other, but *for* each other. Empathize with others’ needs.

