

February 28, 2019

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA  
SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**Minutes of a meeting of the  
Communities of Faith Commission  
Thursday, February 28, 2019**

The Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on Thursday, February 28, 2019 by video conference. The meeting began at 9:00 a.m.

**Members Present**

Christine Smaller (Chairperson) Ross Leckie, Emma Pipes, Harry Ramsaran, Kevin Logie, Cindy Randall, Calin Lau, Jody Maltby (Staff Lead)

**Welcome, check in and prayer**

The chairperson welcomed everyone and offered a time of check in.

The chairperson opened the meeting with prayer. She constituted the meeting in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Agenda**

The agenda was approved by consensus.

**Minutes**

MOTION by Kevin Logie/Emma Pipes that the minutes of the meeting of January 29, 2019 be approved.

MOTION

CARRIED

**Norms**

The commission identified the following norms:

- We will begin each meeting with a territorial acknowledgement and by speaking our pronouns.
- All things discussed within these meetings will be kept to the highest confidence. In all confidential matters, minutes will capture decisions but not conversation. Information may be shared with the Pastoral Relations ministers by the Staff Lead at the direction of the commission.
- We will consider all norms, policies and procedures as interim, to be tested as we learn about the work of the commission.
- We create a culture where we feel comfortable asking questions in order to ensure that we all have the same information.

- We will rely on the Staff Lead to give us guidance in particular with respect to how our work relates to the Office of Vocation and to communicate with the Pastoral Relations Commission.
- We acknowledge that each member of the commission brings important gifts and we encourage one another to share those gifts in support of communities of faith.
- We seek to be aware of the cultural context of communities of faith, in particular communities of a particular ethnic background. We seek to be aware of, and hear from, voices that are not reflected at this table.

### **Strategic Vision**

The chairperson offered a theological reflection on how we will do our work. She offered a reflection from Robert Greenleaf's book "The Institution as Servant". Greenleaf offers a strategy of hope focusing on the possibility of positive change and renewal within the church so that it can be an effective support for communities of faith who can then be an effective support for the individuals within them.

Members of the commission shared their vision and hopes for our work together:

- We should have always before us the health of communities of faith and the health of the region. All of our resources should be constantly supporting the end goal of creating and renewing communities of faith.
- The Bible is an important foundational document for our work along with the report of the Caretakers of the Indigenous church and the guidelines from Affirm United/S' affirmer Ensemble.
- We want to help communities before they are in crises. This is a concern given the large number of communities we support. Having a healthy pastoral relationship is important for the health of the community of faith.
- Sunday morning worship is important as an opportunity to re-charge our batteries. Part of our mandate is to support communities of faith in providing meaningful, relevant worship.
- We want to be connected to the needs of communities of faith across the region particularly those we are not in relationship with. Clusters will be important to keep us connected. We want to be proactive and connected.
- What can we realistically do and what do we need to let go of?
- We do have a budget and we can use that money to connect with communities of faith in a meaningful way so that we can hear from them and be proactive. Letting go of what we don't need to do is a big piece, as is prioritizing what needs to be done.

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- Good communication with the Pastoral Relations Commission will be important. Also hearing from other regional leaders around taking the pulse of communities of faith.
- It would be great to move away from a focus on buildings and focus more on Christian communities. How can we as a church embody Christ's life in our communities? We can look at many different models for what it means to be a community of faith.
- We need clear policies with criteria for decision-making around standard decisions, such as sale of property, renovations, etc, so that the Staff Lead can approve requests within those criteria and report back to the commission. This will free up this commission's time to focus on big picture visionary work and proactive support of healthy communities of faith.
- It is unfortunate when churches close in places where they are very much needed.
- What is the test criteria for our work? Everything we do, every decision we make, should be to promote healthy communities of faith.

### **Criteria for the work of the Commission**

- Everything we do, every decision we make should be to support healthy communities of faith.
- Having a broad geographic United Church presence is important. We will consider the need for ministry in any geographic location, particularly when a congregation is considering closing.
- We need a strategy for recruitment, training and ongoing nurturing of volunteers to support communities of faith.
- We are committed to new ministries and missions within the region and new possibilities for what a community of faith might look like.
- Congregations are all considered communities of faith but not all communities of faith will be congregations. It is okay to use the term congregation when we are referring to a congregation. We can help to develop a broader understanding of what a community of faith might be; to dream outside the traditional congregational model.
- Sometimes the commission will need to give direction to staff as to when a community of faith may be – or not be – a priority in the use of resources, both human and financial.
- All of our policies will be living, breathing documents. As such, all will be interim and subject to frequent review, particularly in the early stages of our work. Applying interim policies will not create precedent.

## **Policies**

The Staff Lead reviewed the work that has been done to date by the Governance Task Group of the Regional Executive. The commission has responsibility to develop policies that support our mandate. Some of these policies need to be in place quickly and could be interim policies while we continue to live into our work.

It was agreed that we will need policies covering the following:

- Living in a covenantal relationship with each community of faith, including support to new and emerging ministries
- Development of a Living Faith Story, including articulation of mission and ministry
- Property Matters
- Ensuring compliance with policies and polity of the United Church, including reviews of communities of faith under section J4 of the Manual
- Hearing appeals from communities of faith and their governing bodies
- Clusters and networks, including ministry with children, youth and young adults
- The Interim Ministry Committee

The Staff Lead will clarify the role of the commission with respect to formal reviews of communities of faith and in particular the budget to support this work.

MOTION by Ross Leckie/Cindy Randall that the policy on manse funds, as revised, be approved as an interim policy subject to review as deemed necessary by the commission.

MOTION

CARRIED

The commission revised the policy to allow the Staff Lead to approve a one-time use of income from manse funds to a maximum of \$25,000 provided all other criteria within the policy are met. Requests over \$25,000 will come to the commission for consideration. If a community of faith returns with a second request for use of income, this will come to the commission for consideration.

MOTION by Cindy Randall/Calin Lau that the policy on the Interim Ministry Committee, as revised, be approved as an interim policy subject to review as deemed necessary by the commission.

MOTION

CARRIED

The commission revised the policy to include that two members of the committee will be order of ministry (active or retired) with training as Intentional Interim Ministers. The commission may make suggestions through the Staff Lead to the Nominations Committee who will populate the Interim Ministry Committee. The commission is concerned about the authority of the committee with respect to credentialing of interim

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ministers and about the role of the committee in making decisions. Further conversation is needed.

These policies will be sent to the Regional Executive for inclusion in the Shining Waters Regional Council governance handbook.

The policy on property was deferred to the next meeting to allow for further work. Cindy Randall and Harry Ramsaran will work on the policy and will bring the Staff Lead into the conversation if needed. Other policies were deferred to a future date.

## **Communities of Faith**

### **West Hill United Church**

The commission considered the letter from Rev. Mark Fearnall.

MOTION by Harry Ramsaran/Calin Lau that no action is necessary by the regional council with respect to West Hill United Church.

MOTION

CARRIED

The Staff Lead will take the next steps as directed by the commission and will forward the response on regional letterhead signed by the chairperson. The commission will take no further action on this matter.

### **Saint Luke's United Church**

The commission considered the request from Rev. Andrew MacPherson.

Christine Smaller and Emma Pipes will attend as a listening team and report back to the commission. The commission will use this opportunity as a test study to help us think through how to respond to communities of faith and criteria for decision-making. It was noted that normally commission members will not be the ones to visit communities of faith, but we do not yet have trained volunteers for this work.

## **Future Meetings and Tasks**

It was noted that there are a number of resources that have been prepared by the former presbyteries that could be used to support communities of faith. The Staff Lead has gathered these and will review them in the next few weeks. It would be helpful to create check-lists related to specific areas of work that could be sent to communities of faith.

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The commission evaluated the meeting and expressed appreciation to the chair for her leadership. There was discussion about future meetings. The next meeting will be a video conference on March 28<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. – noon. At this meeting, we will consider setting a consistent date for meetings. We will also discuss whether we want to continue to meet by video conference or schedule an in-person meeting before June, 2019.

**Closing**

Kevin Logie closed in prayer and the meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

**Next Meeting**

Thursday, March 28, 2019 from 9 a.m. – noon by Zoom video conference.

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## Property – Manse Funds

POLICY NAME: Community of Faith: Property – Manse Funds (Interim Policy)	Date Approved: February 28, 2019
	Review date: As necessary by commission
Purpose: This policy outlines the restrictions on use of Manse Funds held by Communities of Faith	

### Background and Context:

All property of communities of faith are held by its Board of Trustees. This includes land, buildings, funds and investments and any other kind of property. The Trustees must comply with the United Church of Canada's requirements for Boards of Trustees in matters related to communities of faith property. A manse is such a property, but the Region is responsible for making decisions on requests from communities of faith relating to the purchase or sale of a manse and for the use of proceeds arising from the sale of a manse property.

### Use of Manse Funds

**1. Manse Capital Funds and Use of Income:** The capital of manse funds shall be invested by the Board of Trustees and the income may be used by communities of faith to fund ministerial compensation. The Staff Lead will be able to approve a one-time use of income from manse funds to a maximum of \$25,000 provided all other criteria within this policy are met. Requests over \$25,000 will come to the commission for consideration. If a community of faith returns with a second request for use of income, this will come to the commission for consideration.

**2. Other Permitted Uses of Manse Capital Funds & Region Mandated \$150,000 Manse Reserve Fund:** The Region will allow greater flexibility with respect to usage of manse capital, subject to the approval of the Communities of Faith Commission, some or all of the manse capital funds held by the Trustees that are in excess of the mandated \$150,000 manse reserve fund, may be used for the following purposes:

- i. To fund the purchase of ministerial housing,
- ii. For a mortgage for ministerial housing,
- iii. Bridge financing to facilitate the sale of church property, if needed during an amalgamation,
- iv. Capital renovation projects within the community of faith's property, and
- v. Other major capital projects that may be needed by a community of faith within the community of faith's property.

**Caution:** If any capital funds are expended for the purposes as noted in Items i) to v) above, the income from that capital will no longer be available to offset ministerial compensation and the income must then be derived from other sources.

**3. Minimum Manse Fund Reserve, \$150,000:** The minimum value of the unencumbered manse fund reserve to be held by the Board of Trustees shall not be less than \$150,000. Where manse fund capital values are currently less than \$150,000, this change in policy will have no effect.

**4. Uses of the Mandated \$150,000 Manse Fund Reserve** The manse reserve fund shall be retained by the Board of Trustees for potential use, with prior Region approval, for ministerial compensation where a community of faith is not able to fulfill its financial obligations to a minister or for other uses related to the closing/ disbandment of a community of faith, as approved by the Region.

## Communities of Faith – Interim Ministry Committee (Interim Policy)

This policy outlines the authority, membership and responsibilities of the Interim Ministry Committee and the relationship with the Communities of Faith Commission.	
<i>Date Approved: February 28, 2019</i>	<i>Review date: As necessary by commission</i>

### Purpose

An Interim Ministry Committee will be a committee where expertise is gathered, best practices and knowledge retained and integrated into our interim ministry.

### Accountability

The Interim Ministry Committee is accountable to the Communities of Faith Commission.

### Authority

The committee does not have decision-making authority with respect to Interim Ministers. The committee will report to the Community of Faith Commission. **IIM: Resource for Regional Council Handbook**

The committee will make recommendations to the Communities of Faith Commission with respect to Interim Ministers.

### Membership

A committee of six (6) individuals, including two lay members who have interim ministry expertise and two members of the order of ministry (active or retired) with Intentional Interim Ministry training.

### Terms of Office

The term will be for three years with a renewal for one term.

### Staff Support

This would be primarily from the Staff Lead in consultation with the Pastoral Relations Ministers.

### Responsibilities

The Interim Ministry Committee will appoint 1 or 2 representatives to a transition team when requested. **IIM: Resource for Regional Council Handbook (p. 9)**

One of the representatives / members will provide guidance to the search for an interim minister, acting in the liaison role.

The Committee will

- a) communicate regularly with the IM representatives appointed to transition teams
- b) receive mid-term and final reports
- c) receive evaluation reports and forward to the Office of Vocation

The Committee will appoint two representatives for Exit Interviews with Interim Ministers. This exit interview will be overseen by the Office of Vocation minister.