

EQUITY COMMITTEE (Action Plan to follow)

At the 2019 annual meeting, Shining Waters Regional Council established the Equity Committee, tasked with engaging the Vision Statement approved at that event.

The approved **Vision Statement** is:

Striving to be faithful followers of Jesus in our time and place, Shining Waters Regional Council will continue to remove physical and other barriers to participation in the life and work of the Region and society, committing itself to be open to the Spirit. Resisting all forms of oppression, we welcome and celebrate people of all abilities, any sexual orientation and gender identity, racialized persons, and all others who are marginalized, in the life and work of the Region.

The Equity Committee was represented by Karen King at the Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble (AUSE) Annual General Meeting of 2019. She asked questions and concluded that the affirming process was missing some critical analysis that would allow AUSE to increase the participation of the target group in the United Church congregations.

AUSE also identified that they need more diversity and will include the participation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour in the life of the church. The Equity Committee was represented by Greg Daly at the AUSE Annual General Meeting of 2020. He noted that AUSE has acted with some intention to engage Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) voices through specific and intentional conversation led by BIPOC members of AUSE. This work is ongoing.

Karen King made the ratified motion for AUSE to increase their annual fee from \$100 to \$500 so that they would be able to do the additional training and follow-up that is necessary to help the congregations become more inclusive.

It has been a challenge to fully engage our task force and COVID-19 has made it difficult to advance our efforts fully, as ministerial staff has had their hands full. We had one member resign early in the term.

Nevertheless, we remain committed to using the Vision Statement to advance equity considerations that would see ratification of our Affirming designation with AUSE (Affirm United / S'affirmer Ensemble) as well as the development and subsequent implementation of an Equity Action Plan.

One of our goals is to make the Vision Statement something that is alive and exciting and will, in itself, be inspiring.

As we have engaged, our emerging sense is to grow a framework that invites people to conversation through storytelling and sharing, emphasizing key language from the Vision Statement: "as faithful followers," "remove barriers," "remain open to the spirit," "resist

oppression,” and “welcome and celebrate.” We have used these frames to develop an action plan that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and grounded in time so that we can be accountable to our goals.

Key to our vision is embracing of cultural realities and histories that, when engaged, offer learning and growing through challenges to status quo. We believe this requires individuals and groups in Shining Waters Region to fully bring body, mind, and heart to this work.

To ensure that we are creating space for this communication and interaction, we sought input from committee members and regional commissions (Executive, Communities of Faith, Pastoral Relations, Social and Ecological Justice) and committees (Inter-cultural and Diverse Communities, Youth Network, Right Relations Circle).

On September 9, 2020 members of the Equity Committee hosted an online conversation to engage these questions. It was a meaningful time of learning and sharing that offered valuable input to the Equity Committee.

We invite the commissions and committees of the region to consider the following questions as they discern their own equity work and find a place to start/continue their journey.

- *How do we model what we believe about equity and belonging in the way that we come together?*
- *What is our part of living out the equity vision?*
- *How do we bring our whole selves to our gatherings?*
- *How are our practices reproducing inequity? Do our policies aim to specifically increase equity?*
- *How is bias at work in our policies?*
- *In what ways do we “default to White?”*
- *What are the assumptions about what and who matters? Are differential impacts considered?*

The fruit of this work we have edited and developed for the purpose of opening further conversation at the Regional Meeting. We will offer a short reflection that draws together our own experience of equity to move the conversation forward.

This engagement seeks to grow commitment from individuals and representative communities to challenge assumptions within regional systems and structures in ways that inform and facilitate the implementation of the Action Plan.

The proposed Action Plan will be considered at the Shining Waters Regional Meeting along with a motion to receive it for implementation. Further a motion will be advanced regarding the Region’s Affirming status.

At present we are working to develop a Regional Affirming Ministry Celebration (that could take place in person or online) tentatively set for PIE DAY March 14, 2021. Our goal for this event is to lift up community examples of Affirming Ministry and chronicle the Affirming journey of communities of faith.

We welcome your input, your engagement, and your assistance in realizing these tasks.

Respectively submitted

The Equity Committee is:

Hedy Baker-Graf

Greg Daly

Karen King

Wayne Monague

Julian Munro

Staff support: Susie Henderson