

September 16, 2020

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

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Communities of Faith Commission
Wednesday, September 16, 2020**

The Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on Wednesday, September 16, 2020 by video conference call. The meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

Present:

Christine Smaller (Chairperson), Calin Lau, Amy Lee, Kevin Logie, Sandra Nottegar, Cindy Randall, Gloria Tozek, Harry Ramsaran

Jody Maltby (Staff Lead), Kim Uyede-Kai (Communities of Faith Support and Right Relations), Jeffrey Dale (Faith Formation, Youth and Young Adults)

Regrets: Carolyn Harding

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson welcomed everyone. She encouraged the commission to reflect on the story of the rich person entering Heaven, Matthew 19:23 – 30, through the lens of equity. Members checked in with a particular reference to equity in the church and the region.

Christine Smaller gave an acknowledgement of the land, and acknowledged our commitment to being a safe place for all people to gather and participate in our Region. She offered an opening prayer.

The chairperson constituted the meeting in the name of Jesus Christ.

Agenda

MOTION by Amy Lee / Harry Ramsaran that the agenda be approved as presented.

MOTION

CARRIED

Minutes

MOTION by Cindy Randall / Calin Lau that the Minutes of the meeting of the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council dated July 29, 2020 be approved as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Equity Committee

The commission broke into two groups to discuss the following questions:

- How will we as a commission live out the Equity Vision Statement?
- How can we revise our policies to increase equity?

The commission returned to plenary. The following insights were shared:

- Transparency is important in our work. People need to know we are listening.
- How do we hear the voices of smaller congregations? Too often we only hear from the larger congregations.
- In any decision, we need to ask ourselves if we have heard from all the voices we need to hear from. Whose experience are we missing?
- It is important to understand the context within which we are making decisions, which is why our mapping project is so important.
- There is a disconnect between policies we are developing regionally and people in congregations. Often they are not even aware of policies until they need to make a big decision and find themselves dealing with our commission.
- What do we mean by equity? Is it equivalence or each according to need? If we can't meet all the needs, how do we set priorities? We need to define equity for our purposes so we know what our goal is.
- Equity and equality are not the same thing; it's about participation, inclusion, justice, and acknowledging different needs.
- Not all parts of the region have the same level of diversity. We oversee a whole region that doesn't all look like Toronto.
- Being affirming holds its own place within this conversation. Some congregations take the intentional step of joining Affirm United/S' affirmer Ensemble. Others are not that official but are still intentional in their inclusion and living an affirming way. We want to broaden our understanding to ensure that it's not just about the structure of Affirm United/S' affirmer Ensemble, but rather is about a congregation's actual mission to be affirming within their community.
- Faith formation includes all ages, identities, orientation, including those we don't always remember such as the UCW and other women's groups, men's groups, adult bible study, intergenerational activities.
- Equality is giving everyone the same resources; equity is distributing resources based on need.
- What does it mean to support congregations that are in need?
- There are cultural differences in how congregations ask for help.
- We need to reframe support not as a hand-out from a benevolent region but as a way to ensure we have a thriving UCC presence to serve God and the community
- Often affluent churches come for money to support an innovative project while a struggling church comes for money to fix the roof or pay for a minister. We need to reframe the conversation about being self-sufficient

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- We need to be aware of communication issues, particularly within the regional meeting, so that those who do not speak English or for whom it is not their first language are able to participate fully in the region.
- Find ways for the commissions and committees to support each other and not duplicate each other's work.
- The critical task of this commission is to translate information into policy that will effect change in our communities of faith. How we write policy does have an impact in our communities of faith. We need to keep in mind our congregants served by our communities of faith.

Kim Uyede-kai shared an image to help understand equity. She described three children of different heights trying to watch a ballgame from behind a fence. Equality would be providing steps so that all three could see above the fence. Equity is getting the children out from behind the fence and into the park so they can participate fully. Equity is removing barriers so that everyone has equal access in appropriate ways.

The commission agreed to the following commitments for the coming year:

- Bringing wise speakers to inform our work each month with a particular lens of equity
- Intentionally implementing change out of the learnings from speakers; determining how to be accountable for implementing change, translate our learnings into policy and practice
- Writing policy to support the region's commitment to equitable sharing of resources across the region
- Completing the mapping process with EDGE to help lift up the needs across the region to inform how we will strategically support congregations and prioritize ethnically diverse congregations.

Severn Bridge Pastoral Charge

MOTION by Kevin Logie / Sandra Nottegar that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approves the request of Ardtrea United Church and Heritage United Church to amalgamate effective January 1, 2021 under the name Severn Shores United Church.

MOTION

CARRIED

Metropolitan United Church, Toronto

MOTION by Amy Lee / Kevin Logie that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approves the recommendation of the Intentional Interim Ministry Committee that the work of the Intentional Interim Minister is complete at Metropolitan United Church, Toronto and the congregation is eligible to enter the search process.

MOTION

CARRIED

Collaboration Handbook

Several questions were raised and it was determined that more work is needed. Cindy Randall and possibly Gloria Tozek will meet with Islay Scott to discuss further.

Email votes

The Commission voted by email in favour of the following:

- a) East End United Regional Ministry approved the lease agreement between East End United Regional Ministry and the Neighbourhood Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

COVID Financial Update – Jody Maltby

Jody provided the following update:

- 5 congregations have received a UCC emergency loan of \$10,000
- 6 congregations have received approval to use restricted funds
- 22 congregations have received approval for Canada Emergency Bank Account (CEBA) loans of \$40,000
- 20 congregations received a loan from Toronto United Church Council (TUCC) against their Investing in Ministry Fund investment income
- At least 5 congregations have applied for Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) (this grant does not require regional approval so we aren't formally tracking but this is anecdotal)

Regional Council Annual Meeting – Jody Maltby

The regional meeting will be held virtually on October 17, 2020. The theme is *Becoming One in Christ*. This meeting will focus on significant conversations about anti-racism and equity and includes a proposal for an Intercultural Diversity Commission. The Celebration of Ministries service will also be held virtually on Sunday, October 18, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. Both will be streamed on YouTube as well.

Kim Uyede-Kai provided details about two pre-meeting events to listen and learn around anti-racism. These are open for anyone in the region to participate. On Tuesday, October 13th from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m., there will be an online gathering for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour facilitated by Diane Hope. On Thursday, October 8th from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m., there will be an online gathering for White people facilitated by Pegi Ridout.

Details about the meeting, the service and the pre-events will be available shortly on the SWRC website.

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Youth and Young Adults – *Jeffrey Dale*

Jeffrey provided an update on his work with youth, young adults and faith formation. He highlighted three items: the program for youth connected to the regional meeting, gatherings for music directors, and a recent letter to congregations lifting up resources to support worship as they think about re-opening. The commission was reminded that his work is in our mandate. We were invited to think about how we can support his work.

Closing: The commission paused to hold Carolyn Harding and Karen Hilfman Millson in prayer. Jeffrey Dale offered a closing prayer and the meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Next Meeting: October 21, 2020, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.