SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL - PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMISSION

EQUITY GOAL RESEARCH PROJECT

Final Report

June 22, 2021

Greetings to you in the name of the One who calls us to justice and equity.

The report that follows is the result of the Pastoral Relations Commission's commitment to examine our pastoral relations policies and procedures through an equity lens. The commission was particularly interested to know how racist/sexist/ableist bias has impacted ministry personnel and the pastoral relationships in our communities of faith in Shining Waters Regional Council.

Who is recruited and chosen in search processes for ministry personnel? Are there differences in the terms of the pastoral relationship between ministers who are White and all other racialized ministers, and why? What about ministers in the LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit community, differently abled ministers, or indigenous ministers? How does this bias affect the joy, health and excellence of these ministers?

Following a call for proposals, researcher and diaconal minister Marcie Gibson was selected to conduct research in our region on these questions. The report documents her findings and contains a wide range of recommendations to address equity issues in pastoral relations. On June 15, 2021, the Pastoral Relations Commission met to review the report. The commission recognizes that it is at the beginning of a major piece of work to review the findings and recommendations and make changes that will promote equity. Some of the recommendations are beyond the scope of the regional council and will be passed on to others in The United Church of Canada to consider.

The commission is fully committed to translate the recommendations into an action plan that could impact a variety of practices and policies within Shining Waters Regional Council. This work will begin in earnest in the fall of 2021. The report is a public document, and we invite feedback from all who have taken the time to read it. This feedback can be sent to swrc@united-church.ca. Feedback received by October 1, 2021 will allow the commission to take it into consideration as we map out a response and implementation plan.

In The United Church of Canada, we are on a long journey to recognize, confront, and eradicate racism, bias, and discrimination. The report is distressing to read at times as we hear about the experiences of ministers who have experienced pain resulting from inequity in the area of pastoral relations.

We hope that this report and the follow up that it calls for will bring us further along on that journey and help us live into the theological vision that God calls us to, as articulated in this statement from our Shining Waters Equity Policy: "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."

May it be so.

Blessings,

Rev. Andrew Comar
Chair, Pastoral Relations Commission
Shining Waters Regional Council

Equity Goal Research Project

Final Report

For the Pastoral Relations Commission
Shining Waters Regional Council
United Church of Canada

Presented June 15, 2021

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Dedication

This research is the work of participants; their stories, our stories, their perspectives, our perspectives, the path behind and the path forward that they see, and that we all [now] see, towards equity and equitable practice in Shining Waters Regional Council's pastoral relations. This research is dedicated to those who patiently and persistently, with time and energy, do the holy work of justice-making, to our elders in this work who have gone before, to our youth who take up and challenge this mantle, to our Creator, Spirit, and Christ who guide us.

Preamble

<u>**Prayer of Thanksgiving**</u>

Creator, we give thanks to you.
We give you thanks for all your creation; the ways it sustains us and teaches us.
We give thanks for the waters. The waters that cleanse our ears, our eyes, our lips, our hands, our bodies. The waters that refresh, enliven, and give us strength to walk on a good path.
We give you thanks for the earth. For the ways that it holds us firmly and tenderly. For the variety of shapes and forms, and the life that it sustains.
We give you thanks for plants and medicines that nourish and heal.
We give you thanks for the creatures; those that live in the waters, on the land, and in the air.
We give thanks for their lessons and stories about how to live together, acknowledging the hurts that they can inflict on each other and their capacity to care and change.
Creator, we give thanks for your winged ones. Those who show us how to pick up and go to new places, to have long sight and clear song, to build nests to raise up their young and to shelter from the storm.
Creator, we give thanks for our ancestors, our ancestors in faith, our ancestors in family and culture, and our ancestors in the struggle for justice.
We give you thanks for elders and teachers who share their wisdom and their experiences.
We give you thanks for the young children and the youth; the promises that they bring, the lessons that they share, and the opportunities to learn together.
We give thanks for the moon that helps us see the passage of time, the sun that offers us its strength and your son who offers us his love.
Creator, we give thanks that you accompany us in this sacred work of listening, speaking, and transformation.
May we do right by you and all our relations. Amen.

<u>**Introduction**</u>

The United Church of Canada has a long and complicated history of inequity in its pastoral relations systems. From the disjoining of deaconesses upon marriage to the unequal preparation of Indigenous ministry personnel, from systemic pay differences for female ministers to overt racism against Japanese ministers in the west, from the slow implementation of the 1988 decision to commission and ordain people of all sexual orientations to the watershed racial injustice truth-telling at GC43, and more … we are not strangers to questions of equity. In this conversation today, we are grateful for the elders and story-keepers who help us to remember all that we endure and celebrate, and how we got here.

In May of 2019, Shining Waters Regional Council, passed the following Equity Policy.
> *"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 full participation and leadership 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."*

Subsequently, each regional commission was asked to consider how they will enact and embody this policy. The Pastoral Relations Commission considered their area and decided that they needed more information about the experience of equity in the region's pastoral relations system before making policy or procedural changes. Again, they were not strangers to equity conversations, but wanted to make strategic decisions, grounded in analysis as opposed to anecdotal stories. In the fall of 2020, they posted a call out for proposals, expecting the research would take place February-May 2021. Alongside this research request, the commission continued to engage in its own internal anti-racist education and equity training with the assistance of resource people.

This report is the compilation of the Pastoral Relations Commission Equity Goal Research Project, Spring 2021. The purpose of the research: The Pastoral Relations Commission seeks to know how its practices are reproducing inequity and whether its policies aim to specifically increase equity. Inherent in that, is how effective the policies are in increasing equity.
In aid of this general inquiry, the goals of this project were: to assess the impact of current SWRC pastoral relations policies and procedures, and to determine whether or not these policies "further resistance to all forms of oppression, welcome and celebrate people of all abilities, any sexual orientation and gender identity, racialized persons, and all others who are marginalized."

Theological Grounding

The preparation, development, research and analysis of this project ran from mid-January to the end of May; from Epiphany, through Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost. Despite the Covid pandemic, the rhythms of the liturgical year have accompanied this journey. Revelation, lament, discernment, prayer, doubt, elation, trust of the Spirit, gathering energy – these have been present in the research and conversations along the way. It is not lost on me that we have now arrived in Ordinary Time, in a year that is anything but ordinary. Pentecost & Ordinary Time offer us examples of how the early church negotiated their relationships with each other, leadership, and with surrounding communities. This project, too, seeks to name the current reality and paths forward, towards living God's kin-dom.

Identity of the Researcher

My name is Marcie Gibson (she/her), a diaconal minister, living in Hamilton, with a passion for justice and equity in the church and beyond. I am currently in part-time congregational supply ministry and on Program Staff with the Centre for Christian Studies. I also have taught the UCC Polity and Administration at UTC, with ordination students and those in the Admissions process. I have significant UCC pastoral relations experience; with the Great Lakes Waterways Presbytery & the All Native Circle Conference's Councils on Learning, chairing the Ministry

Personnel and Staff Committee of Waterloo Presbytery, as a Commissioner to General Council 43, and currently serving on the Office of Vocation Response Committee.

I entered ministry following a vocation in social work and community organizing in Montréal. This included participatory action research and community needs assessment work; supporting grassroots, student, and non-profit groups to develop campaigns, projects, advocacy, environmental and social justice-oriented change. I grew up in the Anglican church (in Toronto) and transferred into the United Church in my early 20's while in Montréal. I am white, Canadian-born, recognizing the privilege that affords me in this social context and in the church. I have been an out queer person for 30 years, have experience in neuro-divergent communities and parent in an interfaith family. My own social location informs my pastoral relations experience, the questions I ask and the analysis I bring to ministry, and this research. It helps me to bring an intersectional lens and think critically about systemic implications.

Role of the Advisory Group

The Advisory group consisted of four members of the Shining Waters Pastoral Relations Commission: Rev. Lawrence Nyarko, Robin Pilkey, Rev. James Ravenscroft, and Rev. Liz Mackenzie. Each one brought diverse expertise, experience, identities, and perspectives. They helped to identify policies and documents, provided context and explanation for how the Pastoral Relations Commission has been operating in the last two years, review research criteria and questions, troubleshoot how to invite participants, and the review draft version of this document. After our initial orientation together, we met approximately every second week for 90 minutes. Although they did not have access to the interview notes, they did hear about emerging trends as the research unfolded. The Advisory Group also kept the Pastoral Relations Commission informed on the process.

Overview of Research Methodology

While policies can be evaluated using theoretical criteria, their efficacy is best measured by qualitative research, engaging those who are primarily affected by such policies. The study used a *phenomenological* methodology – listening to various people's experiences of pastoral relations (policies and procedures) at different stages of the process, and their own assessment and recommendations. This was carried out by a series of interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Overall, there were 49 direct participants: 20 interviews, 2 focus groups with 11 participants, and 18 people who participated in surveys. These included ministry personnel who were searching for a call/appointment over the last 18 months, those who have been called or appointed recently or have started a new pastoral relationship in the last 14 months, pastoral relations liaisons, and members of Community of Faith search committees. More details are outlined in the methodology appendix. This primary research was held up alongside conversations with various regional and national staff and other regional committees, reading policies and process documents, and a systematic analysis of Pastoral Relations Commission minutes and motions, including data about terms of call/appointment and search processes, over the past 18 months.

It was important to me that this research be framed as Participatory Action Research. This is a kind of research that centers and prioritizes the participants' active role, not only in sharing their experience, but also their analysis and recommendations for change. Participants are regarded as actors not just subjects or a data pools in the research, and it is assumed that participants will be invited to continue to engage as the region decides which recommendations to implement and evaluate their effectiveness. In this framework, the purpose of research is not just the gathering of knowledge, or publication: it is focused on equipping a group or community with tools for effective change.

Demographic Trends among Participants

Of the 49 participants, 26 were asked for demographic information, and a further 11 contributed only gender and racial information (in focus groups). Search teams were not asked, as they represented whole groups. So, some of these statistics come from a total of 26 and others from 37 people. Where multiple numbers are especially small, they have been grouped as 'various' – again, to respect confidentiality. These statistics are one way of considering the diversity of those who participated.

> **Gender:** 57% female, 5% various non-binary, 38% male
> **Gender identities**: 85% cisgender, 15% various
> **Sexual orientation**: 27% various queer, 73% heterosexual
> **Disability & health status**: 12% visibly or invisibly disabled, 88% currently able-bodied
> **Current Age**: 15% under 40, 19% in their 40's, 35% in their 50's, 31% 60+
> **Racial identity**: 16% racialized-Asian, 19% racialized-Black, 5% racialized-various, 59% non-racialized/white
> **Language use**: 12% language of most comfort-various, 88% language of most comfort-English
> **Multiple languages**: 65% speak multiple languages, 35% only English
> **Accents**: 38% have been told they speak with accented English or believe this themselves.
> **Citizenship**: 19% various-non-Canadian citizenships, 35% born elsewhere-now Canadian, 46% born in Canada-still Canadian.
> Of those who are ministry personnel, **denomination of discernments and ordination or commissioning**: 65% UCC, 8% admitted to UCC, 15% mutual recognition, 12% entering admissions.

It should be noted that there was no diaconal nor Indigenous participation among ministry personnel. This is not necessarily surprising, given the limited participation criteria and low number of diaconal or Indigenous ministers in Shining Waters Region. Further study should take these into account.

Approach to Confidentiality

In a structure and community the size of Shining Waters Regional Council, it is next to impossible to guarantee anonymity. Those in focus groups and interviews were asked to sign

an online consent form, explaining the project's approach to confidentiality. Wherever possible, participants' contributions would remain confidential, and responses or quotes used in the research report would remove identifying information unless it is critical to the message. The names and raw data of all contributions collected will remain with the researcher. In places that confidentiality could not be assured, participants would be asked if they wanted the quote included with their name. After compiling all of the data, I chose to strategically group all of it by subject rather than type of participant, so that this decreased the chance to single out participants.

While it might be tempting to try to 'figure out who said that', based on who you know or have heard speak in the past, I want to encourage readers to resist doing so. Partly, that is to honour the privacy and vulnerability of the participants. It is also to disrupt the problematic idea that we know everyone, and their story. Most of the comments could have been said by at least two participants demographically, and many more in the region and/or wider United Church. This approach holds space for new voices to emerge, for intersectional nuance, and to honour the diversity within marginalized communities.

When reading the report, material that is in double quote marks "…", blue ink, and with a bullet point denotes a direct quote from the participant(s). Most of these are written in the first person, to further preserve confidentiality.

Language in the Research Report

There are a few terms that may be unfamiliar. This research took a wide-angle view of equity and inequity. In line with the region's equity policy, we focused on areas and experiences of racism (including language, colour, ethnicity, and citizenship), sexism, ableism, and homophobia. When referring to all those affected by these and other forms of discrimination, we use the term "equity-seeking" participants / candidates / ministry personnel. This is not meant to gloss over the very real differences experienced between those affected by different demographic identities, which are highlighted in the report, but to also appreciate their similarities when advocating for equity.

While conducting interviews, focus groups and surveys, I made the strategic choice to ask about experiences or perceptions of 'bias', specifically racist, sexist, ableist or homophobic bias, rather than 'discrimination'. My reasoning was to encourage participants to share their experiences, even if they did not think the experience met a legal threshold for discrimination. We know that such experiences are often under-reported, or second-guessed, because of the assumption that they cannot be proven. Participants' own experiences and perceptions are believed and valued, in this research and the interest of the Pastoral Relations Commission's questions.

Lastly, there is a distinction made between direct bias, systemic bias, and structural issues. These are not differentiated based on motivation or awareness, but rather on how it is carried out. Instances of direct bias are categorized as actions against a particular person or group of people, based on their demographic identity. These actions may be intentional, unintentional,

or justified by other reasons or excuses. It's about 'what someone does'. Systemic biases are categorized based on 'the way that' a person or committee carries out its work; usually by choice, assumption, 'social norms', or justification. These can be inadvertent or a way to undermine or avoid equity-seeking candidates. Structural issues are categorized as biases which are a consequence of how a policy is written or a procedure is organized by the organization. Structural biases are usually systemic in nature. Again, these may not be intentional or targeted, but they are embedded in the structures of how we officially operate as church. They have the added bonus that they usually cannot be undone by individual choices.

Limitations of this study

This research project is but one piece of a wider movement to becoming an anti-racist church and an organization that actively lives out equity. There were some particular limitations of this research. Given the parameters of researching during a pandemic, interviews and focus groups could only happen by zoom or telephone. The timeframe of March / April was during Lent and Easter seasons which occupy additional time and attention for ministry personnel and lay people in the church. Likewise, there were difficulties getting participation on the surveys, such that the content is useful, but the sample size is too small to do any statistical analysis.

Because the focus of the research was on the pastoral relations process since the region has been in place – particularly finding and forming new pastoral relationships – those who have been in their current pastoral relationship since before January 2020 were not invited to participate. This means that, by and large, we did not hear from longstanding ministry personnel, nor those in dedicated ethnic or intercultural ministries/missions, community ministries, or indigenous ministries where recurring appointments are most common.

Lastly, since the pandemic has made starting or changing pastoral relationships more complicated, there are likely fewer new pastoral relationships and fewer communities searching than there might have been at a different time. In analyzing patterns in the record of calls and appointments, it is hard to know what trends are statistically significant, or have been influenced by the recent equity policy, and which are a product of this particular timeframe. A lack of historical data collected or held with the region makes it hard to extrapolate or know if trends actually bear out. This research will be aided by revisiting this process and / or participating in similar research on a wider scale.

Experiences, Patterns, Perspectives, and Recommendations

This section weaves together organizational categories with the words of participants. Material that is in double quote marks "…", blue ink, and with a bullet point denotes a direct quote from the participant(s). The first three sections follow the Pastoral Relations process: 1. Profiles and Posting Positions stage, 2. Applications, Interviews, and Selection stage, 3. First Experiences with the Community of Faith stage. The fourth section covers participants' Experiences with the Region, while the fifth looks at What the observed data bears out – analysis of Pastoral Relations Commission actions and policies.

1. Profiles and Position Posting Stage

Two areas were most commonly described by participants, as ways they encountered **direct bias** in profiles and position descriptions.

Many participants spoke about bias in position descriptions **against those who speak multiple languages or have [perceived] accents when using English**. These are usually couched in "language requirements", or an expectation of "excellent communication skills" or "speaking good English".

- "What does that mean? Although English is my second language… Do they want native English speaking people only?"
- "As a liaison: What do you do when you notice a person's English may frustrate a congregation? Say, 'sure it's frustrating at first but then the congregation will love them' and that usually turns out to be the case."
- "They are looking for a minister who has 'excellent communication skills, written and verbal'. I'm not comfortable with that. They don't say it to hurt me, but it hurts. So when I see that in a profile, I am really curious about what that means, because many English native speakers have communication problems, too!"

The **profile was skewed** to a particular type of ministry applicant by the type of qualifications or qualities sought.

- "It's hard to answer whether there was bias in the position description. Sometimes you can read between the lines"

These might include the position being physically inaccessible to those with disabilities, such as a requirement to drive, an inaccessible manse, or not stating whether or how the church was physically accessible for leadership not just for members.

Age

- "Sometimes you get the impression they are looking for someone younger or "young" (able to be good with young children, etc)."

Gender

- "They assume that the 'lead' will be a male, and not someone who is pastoral."

Fame or reputation, requiring experience in large congregations, or by looking at the listing of congregations on one's resumé.

- "If you don't have a PhD or are a big shot, don't bother applying here. The kind of qualifications that they want, are not the qualifications that really matter."

This skewing includes the expectation of vast ministry experience but inability to accept candidates beyond category D, and privileging those who have the personal financial resources to accept part-time positions, particularly in rural areas.

These issues become even more apparent when one considers the **systemic biases** found in position descriptions and profiles. Systemic biases are ways that a position description does not target a particular equity seeking group but creates a situation through neglect or design that perpetuates existing inequity.

Unrealistic position descriptions or qualifications particularly disadvantage applicants with multiple responsibilities, those with disabilities, or who [are perceived to] have limited previous education or experience.
- "Those offering a call were looking for a savior. Somebody to save them. Basically, Jesus with an MBA, but mostly it was the MBA they wanted."
- "There is an implied nature of what being an ideal leader is. No one explicitly said, 'we want Jesus -a white, able-bodied, married with children, Jesus –' but that's what they describe."
- "Search committees 'make' their ideal minister out of these [ChurchHUB] categories and carve out an ideal image. No minister will have all 8 categories at 100%. Ministers will come with imperfections, and together we can use our imperfections to do this ministry together. We should see it as an opportunity to learn together."

These unrealistic expectations include increased technical skills in the job description (even when they are apparent in the congregation), being available to work more than full time on a small salary as the 'sole bread winner', and a focus on production measurements such as how many people will be brought into the church by a new minister.

A strong importance placed on an **applicant's networks** disadvantages those who enter the search process through Admissions, from minority communities, or from a distance. With the closure and dwindling of churches, this also presents fewer opportunities for equity-seeking candidates to be considered for local positions.
- "When my credentials were cleared for admissions, the next step was to find a congregation. How do you do that if you don't know anyone?? Especially when there wasn't so much online, I was given a list of 200 vacancies, and was choosing blindly."
- "I come with the status of someone who already belongs; with the privilege of being born here. There is no question in my mind of my belonging."

The pandemic has made it particularly difficult for applicants from outside of Canada, despite a trend in more applying. Many search committees narrow their criteria to looking only at applicants already living in Canada.

This lack of networking, at times, is exacerbated by **prior experiences of inequity** – either their own or those of similar colleagues. Many equity-seeking candidates are cautious or wary to

apply, and/or have internalized biases which understandably discourage them from risk-taking in the application process.

- "I was familiar with their history. I knew there were places that ministers of colour know not to apply."
- "It's hard to get myself to apply in GTA. I haven't sent out a flood of applications as I had done in the past."
- "I am not so naive to believe that the church is fair."
- "If there are some ethnic minorities, then it is a welcoming church. If there are not too many, I would feel uncomfortable, and wouldn't bother applying there. If it is homogeneous then I know that someone like me would not be welcome or appreciated."

Some of this lack of trust comes from experiencing a **lack of honesty** or false pretense in the search process.

- "One church was looking for a minister. They were just going through the motions, but already had someone chosen which you could tell from their position description."
- "I scan and know that what they put down is not necessarily who they are."
- "We still rely on both ministers and congregations being honest about their strengths."
- "I can't call it a coincidence anymore. I'm not saying older men are bad ministers. We've been trying to solve this since Simon Peter told Mary "We'll take it from here". Just because we've had memorable milestone (in the UCC), doesn't mean that the on the ground experience has shifted significantly for young women."

Building trust is essential both for equity and healthy pastoral relationships. When **search teams are not diverse,** overwhelmingly made up of non-racialized white people often exclusively seniors, an easy basis on which to identify and develop trust is compromised. This also does not portray the diversity that might be apparent in a community of faith.

- "Churches will continue to search for people who look like them."
- "That community of faith is a very diverse congregation, and because of the location, there is huge potential to grow. So, I was so excited when I found them on the vacancy list, but then there were 5 or 6 members of the search team - all were white."
- "They need to reflect the diversity of the congregation. Have had some that are all old white men. Ageism is often a factor in choosing the search members, and I'm not sure to what extent they invited young folks to apply."

Some of these systemic factors both contribute to or stem from **structural issues** in the Profiles and Position Posting stage. One of the most striking structural issues is the lack of attention to **questions of diversity in the profile**.

- "The design [of ChurchHUB] is so generic, it doesn't give space to see if a community of faith has had a discussion about having a minister who is a person of colour."
- "At every congregation I have been in, ethnic minorities were at most 5%. This is the first one that is different, but they don't talk about it. How come I never knew about this?"

While there is a check box for Affirming status, even that does not convey the level of awareness or engagement on diversity in a community of faith.

- "They didn't realize they weren't actually Affirming until filling out ChurchHUB. The privilege to live your life without being aware is astounding right now."
- "As an ethnic minister, I wanted to serve a diverse congregation. I am so tired of serving only-white congregations."

The **technical design** of the ChurchHUB system does not easily lend itself to using different file formats, multiple languages, graphic skills, photographs, or other methods which are less dependent on an applicant's English writing skills. This inadvertently privileges English-educated candidates, often from middle or upper-class backgrounds, without learning disabilities, and who have adequate access to internet.

Although almost all participants stated that *they did not consider ChurchHUB* to affect their experience of equity in the pastoral relations process, there were a myriad of complaints from *every subset of participants* such as; it's confusing, difficult to navigate especially as an older person, clunky, unwieldy, stressful, time consuming, a waste of time, and a disaster. While these are common frustrations when setting up and using a new national system, especially in the first few years, I was most concerned with the complaints that lead people to **circumvent the process**.

- "It was an ineffective tool. The search criteria didn't work."
- "Time was wasted on candidates who were no longer looking for a position."
- "This was a huge problem as there was no alternative way to reach candidates."
- "ChurchHUB didn't work well. We contacted candidates through recommendations."
- "Communities of faith just want to get going with the process."

If the structure of our process is such that applicants and search teams are not faithfully using ChurchHUB, then the equity of our policies and procedures are a moot point.

So, what is **<u>working well</u>** in this stage? Again, most participants *said* there was no bias in ChurchHUB itself, despite it being difficult to use. In fact, many commented that ChurchHUB makes the pastoral relations process more **accessible and transparent**.

- "It opens it up for all to see and use."
- "Technology is an equalizer."
- "It was a good source of candidates."
- "The question of eligibility of a minister is removed, as they have to be on ChurchHUB."
- "It allows churches to read ministers' profiles and invite them to apply. That was quite affirming."

Some found that ChurchHUB made the process more **efficient**, and that the support provided (handbook instructions, how-to videos online, etc.) was very straightforward.

There are eight areas of **<u>recommendation</u>** coming from participants, which they describe as paths to increasing equity.

Applicants would like **more information about communities of faith** available on the profile, that they do not need to specifically request. These include knowing if a congregation has a policy on maternity or parental leave, the physical accessibility of all buildings, if this position is part of a ministry staff team, and statistics on the community of faith's diversity* – both as a congregation and the surrounding community. (**not only racially, but also in age, gender, and other socio-demographic criteria*).

- "I would like to see the statistics of the congregation's diversity. That would be helpful to have on ChurchHUB – both for those who are looking, and for the congregation's own awareness. Demographics would be awesome. Both of who you are as a church and of the surrounding community. Then the question becomes, 'if there is a difference, how can we deal with that difference?'"

Communities of faith search teams would also like **more information on available candidates'** ministry interests and types of churches, communities, or positions they would consider.

- "The ministers should have to do more than pick Shining Waters Region. They should have to narrow it down a little more."

However, there was also a call for **less readily-identifiable information on available candidates**, as has been tested previously in some former Conferences (including Toronto*).

- "Some degree of anonymizing would decrease the teams' ability to just click past a name they don't immediately recognize or can't pronounce. Anonymizing little elements might help us challenge our systemic racism and bias."

**In a latter part of this report, there is further discussion about the pros and cons of the former pastoral relations pilot in Toronto Conference.*

Stemming from the concerns raised, there should be a concerted effort to **diversify the composition of search teams**, at least to be representative of the community of faith.

- Liaisons shared, "nowhere in the handbook does it say that the team should be diverse. But we need to be diverse in our home base, too."

Likewise, there are calls for profiles and position descriptions to have **less emphasis on required qualifications of a minister** and more emphasis on describing the community of faith or its vision for ministry. This may allow for a wider pool of interested or potential candidates and decrease bias as described above.

Liaisons are encouraged to **intervene** more often in the process of **writing position descriptions**; to help prevent unrealistic expectations, bias, lack of honesty, or preferential postings.

- "One place we should intervene is in the position description. Especially if they are trying to fit a whole position into 20 hours. Or to make sure congregations are telling their story, not what they wish was their story."

In order to be effective, search teams and liaisons both reported wanting **liaisons** to have better access to **ChurchHUB**, more training on its use, and clarity in their role at this stage.

Lastly, as will be discussed elsewhere, there is a recommendation to offer **accompaniment to candidates** requesting help or guidance to know where to apply; especially those from overseas or other denominations in the Admissions process.

2. Application, Interview, and Selection Stage

Considering those who apply (or are invited), choosing whom to interview, conducting interviews, and choosing a final candidate are all separate steps. However, while each of these could rightly be considered their own stages, I have grouped them together because we see such common themes. In terms of **direct bias** and/or discrimination, these fall within six main categories.

Many participants, from all subsets, commented on the bias towards those who are considered **familiar** or fit a mold of an ideal or typical United Church minister. This is often phrased in comments such as "are they like us?" which skews towards whiteness, those married with children, straight, English-speaking, Canadian-born..

- "Can we get the old guy, just young?"
- "We had a bias against trans applicants."
- "I know a man who is married with a young child, and he gets so many interviews and unsolicited asks."
- "Of four churches in search, every one of them hired a middle-aged man."
- "They took me because I was male and had been raised in that community - so they thought they knew who I was. Even though I had been gone for decades."

The implicit assumption is that when a candidate fits a familiar mold, they can be trusted, and therefore any expectations – even unrealistic ones - will be met. These are often expressed as the ability to attract young families or being the superstar that a search team has in mind. One search team expressed this as

- "We chose the one who understood our position, who understood the community, and someone who would appeal to a younger demographic."

…who – unsurprisingly - was a white ordained male with some ministry experience. Because familiarity is framed as 'normative,' search teams can say

- "We don't feel that any biases were presented by the team."
- "She grew up in the area and so was familiar with the context."

This bias towards familiarity also works in reverse, disadvantaging candidates who are perceived as 'less familiar'.

- "The search committee placed a high value on experience preaching in Canada, so candidates who had no experience in Canada did not make it to the interview phase."
- "Well how do we even pronounce them?"
- "Committees are always wondering 'is this person going to be okay for us, because we've never had one of those before'."
- "I am invited to preach as a diverse person, … but not getting interviewed for a position. So I hear, 'we won't have you as a minister, but please come and teach us about ministry'."

Familiarity bias often gets couched in an **overemphasis on language skills and/or accents**.

- "I don't always know if they understand me. Are they putting in the work to understand me, or do they think 'I won't even try' because they don't think they will understand me even if they do try."

This comes across in search teams' own assessment of their process – both explicitly

- "We had a bias against accents and third world candidates."

and implicitly.

- "If there were many grammatical or spelling mistakes in the application, that served as a red flag. The wording of sermons was also crucial in how modern the language was. Those offered interviews were more often white and more often male."

When candidates are asked to submit video recordings of their sermons, there may be no consideration given to the complication of computer sound quality. Some candidates spoke of being visited 5 or 6 times to hear their preaching. For multi-lingual candidates, being told that their sermon was 'understood' is often code for 'your accent is not too bad', with little comment on the content or style of the preaching itself. Some applicants are told specifically that their accent is the reason they are not considered for a second interview. In other cases, it is implied or assumed.

- "I have studied and worked all over the world, but the first time I heard about my accent being a problem was in Toronto."

Even those who do not face language or accent issues observe this dynamic.

- "Gender is not so much of an issue, to get through the door as race and accents."

Search teams are also coming to realize how this emphasis contributes to inequity in their process.

- "Over time, we realized we might be biased against relatively new Canadians because of two criteria - effective communicator and medium sized church … Spelling/grammar mistakes in the cover letter hit up against our effective communicator criteria."

This overemphasis on language skills and accent is also paired with the experience of **disproportionate criticism**; equity-seeking candidates being held to higher standards or a deeper level of examination. In one case, a woman was told that she didn't have enough ministry experience, while an older male colleague who had graduated in the same year was offered the position. Another two equity-seeking candidates spoke of this dynamic as well.

- "In the beginning, I thought it was because I didn't have experience, but now that I have multiple years of experience, I still have not found a position in Shining Waters."
- "During the interview they didn't see what I am. I have knowledge, a doctoral degree. if someone else brought that, they might respect it a lot, but in the interview some people didn't even notice [because they were so focused on criticizing other aspects]."

Liaisons noted that when people of colour are interviewed, search teams are often overly critical of them. Teams look more closely at qualifications, especially when candidates have gone through a ministry formation program outside of Canada. There is a false assumption that working with a minister in Admissions is exponentially more difficult, or that extra moving expenses would be incurred.

- "Citizenship is an entry point for inequity. They will use the fact that you are on a work permit as an excuse not to hire you."

- "Some search teams said they didn't have resources to bring someone like me from outside Canada."

Being held to this higher standard, means that when equity-seeking candidates meet those high expectations they are then often idolized or exoticized.

- "'You were chosen because we heard about you'. The thing that makes me sad hearing that is, if I were a … person would I be so phenomenal? Are these gifts and talents enhanced because they are juxtaposed against [who I am]?"

While some equity-seeking candidates are put on a pedestal, others are given the message that their ministry is **second-rate** or only valued when search teams are **desperate** and preferred candidates are not available.

- "'There really isn't anyone serious coming to apply yet, [so we will take you]'."
- "I applied and didn't hear back. Many months later, they contacted me for pulpit supply."
- "When I was a liaison doing the training with a community of faith's search team, someone asked if I knew any ministers from overseas because they were looking for a 'cheap' minister."
- "I got the position kind of by accident, because they couldn't find any other person. The chair knew that without someone, they would close."
- "If there is a vacancy, it's like they go down a list; will it be a young white male seminarian, then white woman, black man, woman of colour, eventually with the assumption that they will have an accent. I wish I could go to random interviews, just to unclog their biases."
- "I wonder if it's just me or if that's common – being able to picture a hierarchy [of choices]?"

While these situations can turn around to be very healthy, this dynamic not only undermines the candidate, it can also undermine the possibility or stability of the pastoral relationship itself.

- "The minute they saw me, their hearts fell. Was it appearance or age? In the next one, I was specifically told that I was just too old for the job."
- "When the call was finally opened and a male minister applied, they offered him the position almost immediately."
- "I knew that if I was a white male or white female, they would have made up their mind right away. They decided to go through the search again."

Even those who are offered preferential access to positions find it harms the relationship.

- "It makes you feel that you got it because of who you are [as male], not about *what* you are. It cheapens the whole thing."

In some cases, participants have been asked **illegal or inappropriate questions** during the interview, that led to biased assumptions, awkward silence, or false generalizations. One liaison remarked,

- "Our racism is so typically Canadian… it is often done with loving probing [inappropriate] questions."

These questions have included: What language do you speak at home with your family? What is your family composition? Do you want to have children? Or leading questions to identify a candidate's sexual orientation. Some participants stated that since no one was at the interview as a liaison or regional representative, candidates were quite vulnerable in this situation. There was no one who actually prevented the search team from discriminatory behaviour for which there could be human rights cases.

In some situations, the issue is a **problematic denial of difference**, and thereby a denial of candidates' identities and experiences.

- "People would comment that my speech was getting better but it never changed. Just their ability to listen changed."
- "I asked if they realized that I am Black. Half didn't realize, and half hadn't thought about it. The colour blindness was a warning sign."

When communities of faith and search teams do not do their own homework and preparation, they put a heavy burden on their candidates.

- "If you get through the barrier of all those other things, once you get into the interview you still have to teach them about anti-racism [or homophobia, sexism, ableism, or a pastoral relationship, etc.]. And that is unfair, but if you are a person of colour you have to do that to ensure it's a healthy pastoral relationship. It's draining. That's what tells me the process is not equitable."
- "Where is the opportunity for diversity? Why do I have to do the extra homework? Are we going to just live with their colour blindness so we can pretend we're like the all-white congregation? And is that healthy?"

In terms of **systemic bias**, we see some understandable overlap in the Application, Interview, and Selection stage to both the direct bias categories, and experiences with Profile and Position Descriptions. Not only are postings sometimes **performative**, but the interview and selection processes can be as well.

- "Someone was already earmarked for the congregation and the process was a sham."
- "The committee had already lined up an ordinand for the subsequent spring."
- "They had someone else in mind."
- "Didn't get the sense that they had even read my profile. I don't think they were really looking."
- "Not sure the congregations actually researched all applicants on ChurchHUB."

In some situations, who applies is mitigated by factors that might be beyond the Community of Faith's control. The **cost of housing** is one factor that was mentioned a few times. Some communities of faith have applicants turn down invitations to an interview, once they find out the cost. Others find that candidates self-select their applications for this reason.

- "In the southern part of the region, the cost of housing is such a huge issue, so we tend to see [applications from] those who are already established in the area or those coming from Vancouver or Calgary, with money."

- "Those applying to large multi-staff GTA churches are primarily male, with many years of experience, and already full time somewhere else."
- "In our smaller community, the candidates who applied were mostly female."
- "In the 100 year history of our church, the candidate was only the second woman minister."

Similarly, **historic or current bias** against the selection of equity-seeking candidates (whether perceived or statistical), causes some **not to even bother applying,** particularly in diverse downtown areas. While such candidates have understandable reasons, this creates a systemic cycle that will need strategic attention to disrupt.
- "I was told, 'don't bother applying there, because they aren't ready for a gay man.'"
- "Black ministers are often banished to the outskirts and Toronto is reserved for others."
- "In Toronto there is a perceived pattern where ministers of colour find it hard to get a position. I would not apply to a congregation in downtown Toronto, even if I'd fit in there. Because I would only have a 20% chance of getting an interview."
- "Congregations in Toronto are in high demand. outsiders have to do a little bit of extra work, to prove that they are ready for a congregation in the GTA."
- "Admittands encourage each other to go to the UCC, but they don't always feel like they belong. The UCC has a lot to offer, but I am disappointed that a church that has been a champion in social justice, don't seem to be able to do this one issue (racial diversity)."

Sometimes this 'extra work' means **applying first to** some of the **smaller Communities of Faith** or smaller communities within the Region.
- "Seems like there is more possibility to move within the Region. People get to know you and that gives you your street cred."
- "They are starting to get positions. They get chosen, but only to 'cut their chops' in small places before being offered flagship congregations. "I'll get a call but in places that have other challenges, and that doesn't actually have other queer people / people of colour / disabled people in them."

This mismatch of identities and skills can be extremely isolating, but also can start the pastoral relationship on a difficult or vulnerable footing.
- "I think there's a real potential for anger leading to bitterness leading to ending ministry, for people facing these and other kinds of issues. I think the church needs to hear that, and to hear, that for those who are staying, to work in the church, and to help the church 'be the church', that takes such a lot of emotional and spiritual energy, as well as physical energy, too."

Sometimes this systemic bias is not framed as 'extra work' but more **temporary or precarious** positions. We see this when Communities of Faith offer short-term appointments to those who are eligible for a call, in order to 'test drive' their ministry, or signal a lack of confidence in their leadership.

One of the most glaring systemic biases is **selecting those who are already known.** This is not just that the applicant is familiar in identity, but that they have some **proven relationship** that biases the selection process. Again, while search teams' choosing may be 'understandable' it does pose a systemic challenge to many equity-seeking candidates who may be less well known or who have not had previous experience in the Region. Sometimes this relationship is **directly with the Community of Faith**.

- "Certainly, I was known to the community. It can't help but create some bias for a person if the relationship has been good."
- "They felt comfortable with me. As their minister in the past, they knew who I was theologically."
- "We received a most positive reaction from the Community of Faith as he is well known to us. There were no biases."
- "I had been attending there as a student, and they thought it would be easier to talk with a congregation who already knew me."

This can be exacerbated in times like COVID when nearly all interview interactions are at a distance, by phone or online.

- "I think it's easier to discount someone you've never experienced in their bodies."

Sometimes this relationship is **through connections during the search and interview process**, often aided by search teams and liaisons, and can effectively hide biases.

- "We are an overwhelmingly white community of faith in a very diverse community. Our biases likely come from lack of knowledge, and this has proven difficult to address. We found our minister through connections; an older white woman."
- "The congregation that I did get a call from, was the one that I had a reference with a special connection. Connections were important here, more so than in other places."
- "We found our new minister through a recommendation, although as a team we were actively searching outside ChurchHUB to widen our search."
- "Their liaison was on a council where I was serving previously, and so knew me. It wasn't really an interview. … It was mostly from the recommendation from the liaison."
- "Since ChurchHUB was not fully functional yet, as the chair of the search team, I contacted people who I knew from my experiences with Emmanuel College and with the Presbytery and Region. I'm not sure about any demographic trends."

Sometimes these **relationships circumvent** the ideally transparent process of **ChurchHUB**, often in the context of those who are chosen to fill short-term vacancies.

- 'Compared to opening up a search call, the fact that she was known was huge."
- "They hadn't posted it on ChurchHUB yet, and so I was the only one they were considering."
- "re: search teams finding someone apart from using ChurchHUB: the regional staff helped us weigh and prioritize."

These systemic biases are also related to **structural issues** in the application, interview, and selection stage of pastoral relations. **Societal trends in who is entering ministry or entering the United Church** affect who the Office of Vocation, Candidacy Pathways Process, or Admissions Board can list as 'available' for appointment or calls. While these three structures

can arguably only authorize those who approach them, it does have a cascading effect on the pastoral relations process. A smaller and more diverse pool of candidates may either favour diversity in selection, or may decrease trust and adherence in the system.

- "Where a prominent church used to get 40-50 applicants, now we are lucky if we get 8 or 10."
- "There are significant Asian and African voices in who is applying. Some are Emmanuel College students coming to get testamur, and then be admitted or ordained. We also have a growing - and on a cusp of growing - group who identify as non-binary or genderqueer. They are more present in the system as available."
- "Further north, and in smaller congregations, more of them are looking for halftime, and not getting the number of applicants."
- "There are those who go outside the UCC to find someone who is 'good enough' - right age, right family, has kids. To me, you've got more than enough in the UCC. ChurchHUB is filled with good ministers. Can these Communities of Faith define themselves out of the UCC? Are we all equal or not?"

A significant number of participants, from all subsets, commented on the equity issues of **technology use**. For some, technology makes it easier for people in more remote locations to apply and be interviewed. It also allows search teams to easily view recorded sermons or worship services. However, as was expressed before, these may favour those with more access to high quality technology – both applicants and search teams. When search teams are limited by only one or some of their members having access to high-speed internet, it significantly impacts the equity and transparency of the interview or selection process.

- "We struggled with how we exclude congregants, with the expectations that they will be able to communicate online. It leaves in the hands of one person."

Likewise, participants, especially those with disabilities or who use multiple languages, find that Zoom (or other video conferencing) makes interviews more difficult.

- "There is no interaction and eye contact, so I don't know what they are doing. Interviews by zoom and recording example sermons myself; it's really hard to show the search team who I am."
- "(from liaisons): Meetings can work quite well with zoom, but interviews not so much. There is only so much that can be conveyed over zoom, and so much harder to get the picture. Phone interviews are even harder."

The **technical structure of ChurchHUB** can mean that search teams are frustrated by not having reliable, timely information.

- "Our search committee reviewed the applications of more than 15 candidates who were linked to our posting through ChurchHUB. We spent significant time doing this and reached out to several of these candidates to find out they had no interest in our position. The ChurchHUB matching process was a waste of time."

Applicants, too, are frustrated by the lack of feedback and information on the search process.

- It's hard to tell if the process was equitable. They didn't give reasons why I wasn't chosen. That's part of the problem. So much of what happens is more systemic - hard

> to pinpoint. The way the system is set up, it can be so easily done and so easily disguised."

As we have seen before, this can exacerbate distrust and the perception of bias, even if it is not present.

The last structural issue identified by many participants is the **absence of liaisons** during the application, interview, and selection stage. While we see this in the direct bias section from applicants, here we see the issue addressed by liaisons. Some see a change from previous experiences where Presbytery representatives would be present, while others are speaking from their experience just within the Regional Council system.

- "When we give more autonomies to Communities of Faith, we just hope and pray that everything will be in order."
- "It used to be a learning opportunity, for education, sitting with them, especially learning new names. I used to attend every meeting. You learn more about the search team when you spend more time with them. If you aren't there to hear some of those biases coming out, it doesn't allow change to happen."
- "We are much farther away from the nitty gritty of who they choose to interview."
- "Once the training is over, we might see a few applications, but that's a courtesy. There's a lot of information there that we just aren't party to. We get back involved when they are making a recommendation to the congregation, but we're not on top of it anymore."

Despite all of these concerns, there are some promising observations of equity in applications, interviews, and selection <u>working well</u>. There appears to be **some growing openness to interviewing equity-seeking applicants**.

- "Even from Africa, I was offered an interview for equity and fairness."
- "I don't see a significant change. Maybe a little more openness than there was in the past. They are happy to get a good competent minister that they can afford."
- "We had a nice conversation, and they took me for a tour around the church. They were very proud to show me their lift, ramp to the pulpit area, and accessible washroom. I was quite impressed, to say the least. They knew they wanted leadership opportunities to be physically accessible."
- "I wouldn't say there is a trend. Have seen a diversity of people chosen."

Also, a **growing awareness and dedication** to an equitable, thorough, pastoral relations process.

- "An excellent presenter gave Council members a workshop on accessibility and inclusion in 2019 and an Inclusion Committee was formed."
- "The description of bias in the handbook is very good, and they feel they have a handle on equity."
- "It's a fairly sterile process.   The search committee represents the best of the congregation, if not the most diverse or representational."

- "(from a liaison): The work I am doing is reopen the door of possibility to those who they don't immediately identify with, so they can do the work to get to know this person."
- "The entire search committee reviewed and evaluated each resume and ChurchHUB profile of the candidates who applied for the position and the candidates who were linked to our position through ChurchHUB. Applicants were offered an interview based on general consensus of the entire search team. We reviewed over 20 candidate packages, and interviewed over 10."

Participants' __recommendations__ in the area of Search, Interview, and Selection include a wide range of pro-active strategies, from minor awareness tips to significant system overhaul. The first set of recommendations can be categorized as **increasing search team's awareness**. There is a need for clarity about policy with applicants from denominations in mutual recognition and Admissions applicants who reside in other countries. In particular, to clarify **eligibility criteria and the financial responsibility** of the Community of Faith vs. the minister for moving costs. These policies are already in place but need better dissemination. Many recommend that search teams participate in **equity or racial justice training**, either through the same required program as ministry personnel, or through a unique program. This training should address practical issues such as

- "How to listen attentively during the interview, how to make the search committee diverse in various ways such as cultural, age, gender, etc. and how to communicate with all candidates."

Others call to increase the search team's **awareness of the demographics** of the surrounding community.

- "Search committees could be encouraged to look at the demographics of the neighbourhood. Not just a 'good fit' with the congregation, but with the community outside the walls of the church, the social context."

And understand how this informs adding **equity topic questions in the standard interview questions**.

- "There is a sample set of questions to use during the interview. I think the questions should be changed to include intercultural or equity general questions. To encourage them, through those questions, to talk about equity with candidates."

To address the concerns raised in the structural issues section regarding liaisons, **liaisons should play a more active or present role** during each part of this stage. This is not solely as oversight, but rather as a form of support and accompaniment.

- "Liaisons can share strategies with our search teams if they are frustrated that they are not having enough interest. We have to let the search teams know that this is not a short process."

Some participants also suggest an alternative system, of having an **advocate / accompanier attend interviews**, especially if accommodations are anticipated.

- "She was there to help negotiate the conversation, if need be. She didn't say anything, except why she was there: to advocate if they needed help imagining how I could fill this position."

This will be further discussed in the fourth section on the Role of the Region.

There is strong need to develop and require a process **of self-evaluation and equity audit** of the search process for Communities of Faith. This will allow search teams to actively participate in their own equity assessment as well as providing crucial data to the Regional Council to further evaluate the efficacy of its equity policies.   This audit would include demographic information on who applied, who was offered interviews, who was turned down for interviews, who was offered a position, with what terms and salary, and where in the region.

- "As a Region we can call ourselves as equitable, but we need congregations to do a real self-audit on their search process."
- "Equity and good behaviour are not habits of the church. So, if you want to nurture a habit, you have to monitor and check it from time to time, to make sure people aren't slipping. The Region says, 'we've made sure we are fair, and everyone has an equal chance' but then they need to check that."

One concrete policy recommendation for the Pastoral Relations Commission, is to develop a **policy on the specific criteria for offering a short-term appointment**. This is particularly important for those who are eligible to accept a call, but find the Community of Faith is only offered an appointment in order to signal a lack of confidence or resist committing to the pastoral relationship.

Lastly, the Commission should **reconsider an active role of regional council and pastoral relations staff** in promoting equity throughout the application, interview, and selection stage. This runs the gamut from encouragement in the existing system, to interventions such as facilitating the matching, and new strategies.

- "Pastoral Relations Ministers should encourage diverse people to apply."
- "Can encourage a search committee to take the initiative, to start the conversation so it goes in a different direction beyond the biases. That's being proactive."
- "You can't tell them who to call, but you can raise the awareness. It's a shared responsibility - for advocacy and education – the Pastoral Relations Ministers and Pastoral Relations Commission. Sometimes one-on-one conversations make more impact."
- "[Without regional intervention] some congregations are missing the opportunity to call the minister that they need but call the one who they want because they look good on paper."
- "What if, instead of search committees picking who to interview, it could be refined to be a networking situation, so that [all candidates and search teams] are aware of each other. Not only who is known, but a process of introducing people and then the committees can make their selection from that pool."

While some of these suggestions may have other technical or ethical challenges, it is ultimately, as one astute participant pointed out,

- "the work of the church not only to ensure marginalized ministers' access to interviews, but also to leadership."

3. **First Experiences with the Community of Faith stage**

The First Experiences with the Community of Faith stage encompasses the experience of negotiating the terms of a call/appointment, after selection, and experiences in the first year of a pastoral relationship. Because the research call-out for participants focused on those in search and those recently called or appointed, not everyone had experiences to share for this section. However, there are still glaring experiences and examples of inequity.

In terms of **direct bias** in negotiations, this is most evident in the **lack of negotiation** that many Communities of Faith expect when appointing or calling equity-seeking ministry personnel. Sometimes this is based on a misogynistic assumption that the candidate is not the sole or primary income in a family, or that the candidate should be grateful to have been offered a position at all.

- "No one brought up anything. It was assumed I would sign the forms as is. I was not sure if this was sexism, homophobia, or ageism."
- "The amount of money I was offered did not reflect the kinds of compliments I was getting, my experience, or our family's needs. They were trying to get away with something."
- "There was no negotiation. I was just glad to have a position."
- "I have learned to negotiate, but a lot of ethnic minorities don't have options. [There is an attitude of], "This is what we will pay a white person, and you aren't going to get more.'"
- "They said that they could only pay minimum because of my category. Those who are white may feel more confident that they could go anywhere. Whereas someone like me, I feel like it's much more limited. Having less security, I didn't want to mess this up and try to negotiate a better deal."

These biases affect not only salary negotiations, but also assumptions about work hour flexibility and the timing of appointments.

- "It is a patriarchal family-style church and they weren't going to pay me for that month."
- "They wouldn't renew my contract until the last minute, so I couldn't negotiate the terms because of being desperate for it. Women are not treated equally."

Discriminatory comments and actions from the Community of Faith, are another form of direct bias. While some result in disciplinary action, most others are brushed off or chalked up to ignorance. As one participant stated, "but ignorance still hurts."

- "We had a relatively new staff member who made inappropriate comments, some about the minister's gender. His contract was terminated."
- "After attending a church for 3 years, one member called to suggest a tutor. 'I want to make your accent like a Canadian'."
- "One person asked, 'How can our minister do weddings if they are bisexual and will cheat on their spouse?'"
- "One or two people said they wanted to 'correct my accent or correct it to be like here'. Because of that attitude, the residential schools could happen in this context."

These kinds of comments were common among equity-seeking participants, and there did not seem to be a pattern of the kinds of Communities of Faith in which they occurred.

- "Just because you allow same sex marriage in your church and you hire the gay minister, doesn't mean you are free of bias or stupid comments."

Not only does this complicate and harm the pastoral relationship, but it also creates more work for some equity-seeking ministry personnel compared to others.

- "I need to expose the passive aggressive behaviour, the condescension, by pointing out the facts that they think I don't know."
- "As a white woman with credentials in that sweet-spot age (not too old, not too young), I don't experience that bias anymore because of my privilege."
- "I have no reason to believe that things have changed… Sometimes those who make assertion about discrimination are told they must prove it But often it's implicit, and yet you know what you know. You can't dismiss a perception at least…I take comfort and have hope that at least one region is attempting to address this."

Akin to the Application, Interview, and Selection stage, there is a **problematic denial of difference** experienced in the Communities of Faith. Ministers are held to expectations that not only deny their lived reality but also their intrinsic identities.

- "Being a minister and being a parent can be very taxing. I still feel like this position was designed for someone who didn't have to think about dinner, dishes, laundry, or lessons. The person before me, if he had an evening meeting, he just up and went."
- "One thing that I've experienced in my white congregations: I couldn't help but feel that I am a black minister who is expected to offer ministry in a way that reflects a euro-centric culture. I've never felt free to bring my black self, black culture, and black experience into the worship."

Conversely, a **hyper-focus on difference** also compromises opportunities for effective ministry.

- "Whenever people have an issue with me, then they start to complain about my accent."
- "They are not comfortable having pastoral conversations with me because I remind them of their granddaughter. Age and gender are linked at the moment for me. While it may be correct, there's nothing I can do about that."
- "[With Admissions ministers], if the congregation doesn't like you then they sabotage your residency renewal. They use that as a tool."

Direct biases, such as ageism, sexism, ableism, racism, and homophobia, **undermine the perception of ministers' leadership and authority** in Communities of Faith.

- "Because of being the same age as some of their children, they have more sense that I needed to be cared for. I feel like I am constantly pushing ground."
- "I hear the undertone, 'Can you really have a church with two female ministers?' Do you really see me in leadership?"
- "When myself and the other female minister were there, we would get comments, "you girls can really run things". It was their way to be nice."

Many of these direct biases also correlate with **systemic biases**. For example, there are unwritten norms **differentiating the negotiation process for an appointment versus a call**. Sometimes this means not haggling over a few months' worth of terms, or Communities of Faith taking the opportunity to save some money while they are in search mode.

- "I had an assumption that because contracts were short, there was no negotiation process. They never opened the door and I don't think I ever knocked."
- "I am comfortable with the appointment, but if I was offered a call, I would negotiate the heck out of that."

What becomes problematic about this, is when it is held up against the statistics of who (gender, age, race, etc) are offered appointments versus calls. *(See final section for details).*

These discrepancies and dynamics are exacerbated by different groups having **different access to negotiation strategies and tools**. By and large, when asked, participants said they did not use negotiation tools, apart from the UCC minimum salary scale. Many said they "used their experience" or "consulted with colleagues", and one mentioned being lent a helpful book, but a number remarked that having tools and best practices would have been very helpful. When relying on informal networks for these tools, those who are less connected, have less access.

- "There are cultural differences between us and other ministers. Even though we belong to a network, there are still so many questions - like is it okay to raise this question or not? to say this or not? That's another challenge for us."

Given the limitations on the data set, it is hard to know if the trends are statistically significant. We do see that those who are assumed female, and those who are racialized, on average, are offered lower % above salary minimum, as well as fewer additional benefits. *(See final section for details).* Despite this data, all Community of Faith search teams who answered the survey said they noticed no bias in the negotiation process. Only with further audit research will we know if that perception is reflective of the current reality.

What we do know, is that there is often a **disconnect between the equity awareness** of the search team and that of the Community of Faith; in knowledge, commitment, and comfort.

- "The parishioners don't know the terms, and they don't even know they are biased. They haven't a clue. They think there is no racism here."
- "When the search team is educated but if the congregation is not on board, it only takes a few people in a congregation to kill a pastoral relationship."
- "I was told by the search team that they wanted to be challenged, but when I began talking about anti-racism I was told, 'we aren't that racist. Please stop, you are dividing the congregation. It hurts'. Sometimes the church needs to divide the church a little 'for the light to get in'. It's not going to get better until not only will I not be called names but it's also not impacting my search or how people perceive my ability to do the job."

This particularly affects equity-seeking ministry personnel, who are both caught in the crossfire of the disconnect and often personally impacted.

This disconnect between the search team and the Community of Faith is complicated by a **structural issue** in the polity of Communities of Faith. **Those who select the candidate are not the same** as those who vote at the congregational meeting, nor those who usually govern on the council / board.

- "Search committees don't always represent the congregation. When you [the congregation] hear from the Board, 'this is the minister you voted for, you better accept them'… there's a real imbalance there. It's tricky. That's where it falls apart a bit. The search team itself, is it set up to fail?"

This is further fragmented when only a subset of the search team are involved in the negotiations, and **without outside accompaniment**.

- "Liaisons: there is great deal of potential for inequity in the negotiation process, and we are not there. I wonder how much of that is in the whole committee versus those who are designated to negotiate."

For ministry personnel who are not Canadian citizens, the Community of Faith must fill out a form so that they can apply for their residency renewal. While this can be a potential opportunity for discrimination, as was noted above, there is a structural issue here with the **Regional Council at arms' length on citizenship**.

- "The region doesn't monitor those things. There are ministers here who are in limbo. Immigration status is seen as a personal matter but is a major tool in perpetuating inequity. Regions take a hands-off approach to it."

Some aspects of equity in initial pastoral relationships are improving. Those aspects that are **working well** fall into three areas. The first of these is the **experience or perception of increased equity in certain demographics**.

- "Being queer is not a problem."
- "Has there been a change in equity? Absolutely. I am not anticipating the same degree of sexual harassment here. Some ill-intentioned comments, but It's getting better."

Though these are not universal statements, every improvement in equity is a step in the right direction.

Some attribute equity to **increased structural supports from** the resources and awareness of **the Regional Council**.

- "In many ways, there are specific people in the region who have helped me know what is normal and not, as we begin."
- "The region seems to be aware of our pastoral relations issues, and are willing to have a conversation about that, even if it's systemic or unconscious."
- "The region has been very helpful. I could call. There were zoom calls you could attend for ministers and treasurers and figuring out finances."

Or **the Admissions Board**

- "I'm working with the admission board as a mentor and accompanier with those who are in first appointments."

Lastly, **Communities of Faith are using pro-active tools and strategies** that strengthen the initial pastoral relationship. These include **relational activities** such as; gently introducing a new minister to small groups and teams, regular contact between the minister and M&P liaison, encouraging a meeting between the outgoing minister, interim minister, and new minister, presenting a video introduction during a live-streamed Sunday service. These also include more **structured strategies** such as receiving support, training, and assistance to ensure that all members of a new ministry team can work together, participating in United Fresh Start or a Healthy Boundaries course to better understand the transition from one minister to another.

Because the research is focused on the efficacy of equity policy and procedure in the Regional Council, most of the **recommendations** for increasing equity in the First Experiences with the Community of Faith stage are actions for the region or wider church to take.

Further research and monitoring of equity experiences in ongoing pastoral relationships are needed, both for their own evaluation and to identify trends in the Region. For some ministry personnel, search teams can be on their best behaviour, or there is a honeymoon period after which discriminatory behaviours surface.

- "It's not the 'before' they need to watch. There needs to be a better monitoring of the 'afters', [period of time after the pastoral relationship has begun]."

Likewise, the region [or Admissions Board] needs to take initiative **to monitor Admissions ministers' appointment dates**, so that this does not become an avenue for discrimination.

- "Most appointments are 2 years, and a work permit is 2 years, but most ministers take 3 years to complete the admissions process. So, we need the region to monitor this so that papers don't lapse due to neglect or intention."

Many participants would like a set of **guidelines and best practices for negotiating terms**, beyond what is available in the UCC Pastoral Relations: Search and Selection Handbook (2000), so that these skills are not concentrated among certain privileged demographics.

For ministry personnel, especially those new to ministry or new to the region, the option of a **mentor or designated accompanying colleague during the first year** of a pastoral relationship will again address some of the inequities in information and networks.

- "For a new pastoral relationship, I would like help finding out how to negotiate, what to expect, someone to ask questions. I have no clue where the answers are."
- "In Shining Waters there are so many older men as your colleagues. There are assumptions that I don't know what I do know, and that I do know what I don't know. It would be helpful to have someone call and check in."

Others call for **general welcoming initiatives by the region**.

- "Someone reaching out to you first, before you need to reach out to them. A welcome and a phone call (not just an email) to everyone who is starting a new post."

- "A welcome package, to know what's available from the region. Here are the groups that meet with ministers. Here's how to connect with your peers, etc."
- "I would like to have a social media virtual map to get to know other ministry personnel around the region (who is serving in which places). To freshen up how we find each other - especially online."

A similar **welcome guide for lay leaders when starting a pastoral relationship** was suggested, "You've got your minister, now what?". While some of this information is included in recent updates of the UCC Pastoral Relations Handbooks, this could be an opportunity to highlight and expand this body of wisdom.

Pro-active regional support and intervention in the initial pastoral relationship, are crucial to many equity-seeking ministry personnel. These include sharing historical information the Regional Council has about a Community of Faith, such as past schisms and landmines, and the previous ministers' terms of call/appointment, particularly % over minimum, technical allowances over basic phone for internet costs, etc. The Regional Council could also encourage discussions with past ministers to understand community dynamics.

Widen the scope of United Fresh Start, to address equity issues before the relationship starts. Furthermore, the region should require explicit equity modules be done, particularly in certain pastoral relationships.
- "I think UFS is fascinating, but churches aren't jumping for it. In their mind, they are already doing this. Maybe the UFS could have more of a germination stage. Beforehand, growing with the search, and then with the ministers after arrival."
- "Have someone come in to support the beginning of a pastoral relationship, like United Fresh Start, but on issues of equity and justice. Especially when you have a marginalized minister or have a community that has marginalized leadership in the church."
- "UFS needs more deliberateness of the region to follow through, to recommend they start with the module on issues or race. The region needs to facilitate it and insisted on the order. The congregation thought 'we're not racist', so didn't take my suggestion."

These calls for United Fresh Start mirror similar recommendations for **lay equity education / education for Communities of Faith** that were strongly recommended by *every subset of participants*. This education must be required, integrated, and done in healthy relationship between the Region and Communities of Faith, not just through their ministers or search teams. Here are some of the comments made.
- "Some of this training needs to go to the ground level, to educate our congregations."
- "Procedures written in a way that includes the congregational education work."
- "We need some really clear guidelines, if we are going to get congregations at the same level."
- "There isn't enough time in the training of the search team to give these issues any meaningful importance. More education is needed at the Community of Faith level."

- "I believe in the power of education. The search committee represents the community of faith, but it's not just about training the search committee. It is a challenge to educate the community of faith to work for equity in their ministry."

Without this education and **commitment to a broader scope of change**, our equity policies will be moot.
- "I'm not even sure how policy would even work in the real world. Until you've done education, policies aren't going to do a lot. It needs to be easily accessible."
- "We need to challenge them to really consider what it means that 'everyone is welcome'. What needs to change, not just be accommodated?"
- "We need to address white fragility and privilege, through advocacy, policy, and education. UCC is good at policy, falls back on advocacy, but need to lean into education, because that's where change will happen."

4. **Experiences with the Region**

This section is less of a 'stage' and more a grouping of responses regarding Regional Council staff, volunteer regional pastoral relations liaisons, regional policies and procedures. While a number of the interview and survey questions for all subsets touched on regional issues, it is reasonable to assume that some participants chose not to disclose experiences of bias or discrimination, due to questions of confidentiality or fear of reprisal.

In terms of **direct bias**, when asked directly, *no participants* named that they had experienced bias in their interactions **with regional Pastoral Relations Ministers**. Many had very positive comments about helpful interactions (great!). In other sections, participants raise concerns that could be classified as direct biases.

- "One suggested that I should not apply for a full-time position and be happy with only part time at this stage of my career."
- "I am not going to tell because they won't do anything about it."
- "The sad thing is, those who are trying to find a way in, find that sucking up to those in authority is much easier, so they won't make waves."

A wider, longitudinal, or more arms-length study may find further material.

The other area of direct bias is **internalized discrimination**. This manifests when equity-seeking ministry personnel do not raise concerns due to their own perception that they are undeserving, should not need accommodation, believe they shouldn't expect more, or are the cause of a problematic situation. These examples are of participants who recognize internalized biases at work in themselves or others.

- "I have compassion for people trying to make equity change, but it's a colonial mindset of always making excuses for others' mistakes."
- "At that time, I was a super-crip[1]. I had my own internal expectations, often shaped by societal expectations, on how much you should be able to do, accomplish, and argue by yourself. I thought I should be able to find a position on my own."
- "Not everyone will raise it with the region, and so it stays and festers. I don't mind a challenge [in the pastoral relationship] as long as it doesn't threaten my personhood, but that's what these [equity] issues do."
- "It's hard to find the fine line or boundary; how to respect staff and request support from them. I don't want to be a burden on them."

While there is limited data on direct biases, more participants identified **systemic biases**. There is a **lack of demographic diversity among the Regional Council staff**; in particular racial diversity, and specifically among the Pastoral Relations Ministers.

- "If the survey finds that after making changes to policy there is still a lack of equity, the next place to look is those who are implementing policies - staff and liaisons."

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[1] This is a term used among some disabled people, short for "super-crippled," to signify a persona who may be overextending or challenging themselves to prove that they are capable. It is only appropriate as a self-given term.

- "Certain staff members are really trying to understand anti-racism work, but the regional council is really not [racially] diverse."
- "If you want to really talk about equity … educating white men can never be the only solution."

There is a perception that the lack of racial diversity among the Pastoral Relations Ministers (and rest of the regional staff) contributes to a limited capacity to create safe space and open dialogue, resulting in **mistrust or guarded trust while interacting with the region**.

- "Just because we have a policy, it doesn't mean the region is experienced as safe. If healthy conversation can't happen among colleagues, what's happening with our churches?"
- "At a Regional gathering, I didn't know my fellow clergy well enough yet to really share openly."
- "When I needed the security of talking, I had to tell the whole story again. I missed having that relationship. I felt in a way a bit abandoned. I was on my own during this, and didn't know the landscape enough."
- As a Black person, I am often wondering how I will be perceived and accepted. So far there has not been a conscious visible equity challenge. I have experienced it in other parts of the church but not in this regional relationship. You go in being ready for whatever. Half of me thinking 'I better be prepared'. But I don't know how much that is taken into consideration."
- "We hear it all the time. We see that representation matters, and if we don't see people like ourselves then it's less likely we will consider it for ourselves."
- "Upward of 90% of the black clergy in the UCC are immigrants. And that says something for me. Why is the UCC not attracting more Black Canadian-born interest? If those of us who are immigrants had grown up in the UCC would we have chosen ministry? I begin to wonder 'do I really belong here?'."

Lastly, **some liaisons themselves struggle to explain biases or identify their own**. If the pastoral relations system relies so heavily on liaisons to do the equity training of search teams, this deficit creates a systemic bias.

- "I don't see equity as an issue for me."
- "I don't know of any search team who would let anyone get away with a bias issue."
- "I struggled to articulate what bias was, especially when training the search team to understand. I hasn't been able to understand it until I could recognize it in my own life."
- "Part of the struggle is being able to recognize our own bias. If you don't recognize it, how can you impart that to others?"

This aspect will be further addressed in the recommendations of this section.

Since this study is looking at equity in the Pastoral Relations structures and processes of the Regional Council, there are more **structural issues** in this section than previous stages.

- "There is a real need for structural change. We have shared our experience so many times, even when we have the racial justice training - we have shared our experience there. But that is not enough. So what???"

When asked about interactions with the **Office of Vocation Ministers or staff**, there were *no reports of bias*, and frankly few reports of *any* interactions during the pastoral relations process apart from technical questions about ChurchHUB access. Likewise, there were no reports of interactions (good or bad) **between Pastoral Relations Ministers and search teams**. This suggests that liaisons are fulfilling this role.

There is a concern with the way that the **administrative functions of the Pastoral Relations Ministers overshadow or complicate their support roles** in the regional staffing structure.
- "Right now, it seems there is more support for the search committee than for those in search."
- "We need someone who can say, 'I hear you', not 'we have a fair process and get over it'. But how do we implement that kind of thing? How do we expect and invite clergy to care for other people, when we feel that nobody seems to give a shit about us?"

As we have seen in other sections, the perception of staff being unavailable or unapproachable disproportionately affects equity-seeking ministry personnel.

Liaisons **lack structural clarity in their equity role with search teams**. If they are expected to enact the Equity policy of the Regional Council, they need to have the tools, power, relationship and authority to do so in their interactions with search teams.
- "There is a problem communicating equity training to the communities of faith [online/during pandemic]. We are already trying to cut things down, and so how do we communicate hours of training that I've had to 10-15 minutes on zoom? Some search teams think they don't have any biases, or think it's not the time to discuss it."
- "Even if we have an equity policy, how do we even implement it? Can we enforce it? Should we enforce it? We have to think about that, otherwise it's a waste of time."
- "Showing up at a covenanting is empty now. We need to have a sense of being with people, that carries right through to the end. I miss the chance to get to know them. When we developed relationship then they realized I was a resource person, they could trust. When you have the relationship, you can ask the [hard] questions and answer their questions and help them through the process."

The **role of liaisons with applicants is minimal and unclear**. Ministry personnel in all stages of the pastoral relations process, when asked about their interactions with regional liaisons, overwhelmingly report that either there was no interaction, they weren't sure if they were allowed to communicate with the liaison, or they were unaware of them / that there was someone who has that designation in the process. In rare cases where there is interaction, these are generally helpful and informative. Many lament this lack of relationship.
- With no accompaniment [from the regional liaison], the system is becoming too effective, but throwing away the relational aspect. If Jesus were a liaison, rather than trying to teach, Jesus would have been kicked out."

- "There is a difference when there isn't a liaison present or when you used to have presbytery reps. I almost feel that ministers are on their own, are more vulnerable. The reps were ministry advocates and helped hold that."

Some of this lament stems from a **comparison between the previous pastoral relations system**, the Toronto Conference pilot pastoral relations project, and the current system. There is not a unilateral consensus on which system is preferred. Most Communities of Faith did not answer this question at all, though one commented.

- "The new system gives everyone an equal opportunity to apply for available positions. It is also broader in scope with ChurchHUB, as potential candidates from outside your local region can see what is out there."

With ChurchHUB, a team can read ministers' profiles and invite them to apply, and many find the Living Faith Story, rather than the 8 principles, is more user friendly. The **equity increasing aspects of the previous systems** were attempts to hide racial or ethnic information, particularly names. This is likened to an orchestra with blind auditions, behind a curtain.

- "I found that helped in identifying my own issues and biases. It was different evaluating people when all you had were numbers."
- "I wish the current system could be a little more anonymous at the front-end than it is."

We know that there were biases and work-arounds in previous systems as well, but it is worth noting the opinions of those who are experiencing the currently pastoral relations systems

Beyond the positive features listed above, there are six areas where regional pastoral relations is reportedly **working well** visa vie equity.   A number of participants find the **Pastoral Relations Ministers approachable and helpful sources of information and wisdom**. This is most often when they have questions of policy, are navigating through a complicated pastoral situation, need feedback on whether a situation is normative, or are considering a change in pastoral relations and want to 'know what's out there'.

- "I talked to the Pastoral Relations Minster several times with questions about what one community of faith really looks like, beyond just their profile. For example, their racial history."

Most of these interactions are time-limited and often technical. There are some that require more extensive intervention or a longer relationship, especially among the designated ethnic ministries in the region. While the majority of these comments come from ministry personnel, there are also comments from the liaisons. **Pastoral Relations Ministers** are useful when liaisons are unsure of a policy or practice. They also **consider wisely which liaison to assign** to a Community of Faith search team; often taking equity, ethnicity, language, and culture into account, alongside geography, availability, and experience.

Overall, the **equity training for liaisons** is effective and well-received. The power chat exercise is especially useful and translates well to the search team trainings. Opportunities with guest speakers such as Cindy Bourgeois, listening to one another's experiences of bias, and sharing one's own as applicable, are the most impactful.

- "It was not the training that shifted my bias, but relationships with people in the church and having that opportunity to be in relationship that made the shift."

Opportunities to be in relationship extend beyond the liaison group, to their experiences with Communities of Faith. Most of the search teams find **the liaisons' role is crucial**.
- "She provided training to the entire committee on three occasions and then assisted us through phone calls and emails all through the process. We would not have managed without her assistance."
- "Excellent. Drawing our attention to the possibility of bias."

Many of the region's **pastoral relations policies and processes** also contribute to equity. Search teams appreciate the training materials, handbooks, and how the search process steps are laid out -thereby encouraging them to develop questions up front and be consistent. M&P Training, the Minimum Telephone Allowance policy and Congregational Designated Ministry policy seek to provide clarity and fairness, if not always equity. It is worth noting that, when asked about regional or national policies that promote or enable equity, most participants could not think of any. This could be an area for further education.

Many people appreciate the **Regional Council's commitment and action** to explicitly address equity. Again, this is not a universal opinion, but is worth highlighting.
- "The Regional Council and staff have worked incredibly hard to keep this issue of equity in the forefront. Systemically, we know it's there."
- "We try, but there is much work to be done."
- "Educating congregations to be aware of biases, aid us to be more welcoming, and provide resources for growth."
- "Commitment to continuous improvement in this area through policy and resource renewal and revision."
- "The recent decisions made to engage anti-black racism, and Iridesce work, helped me believe there is structural change. Having a region that was Indigenous led. Those specific statement of action and direction say that the policy framework is there to engage with. We don't always see them in action, but those policies help frame who we are as a church, and they are tangible examples of how we are to be."

Specific actions mentioned include; encouraging explicit use of pronouns, becoming Affirming, creation and funding of the Equity Committee, Intercultural Diversity Commission, and the Social and Ecological Justice Commission.

This research project is part of the Regional Council commitment and a visible and tangible action, in and of itself.
- "Nobody has ever asked me these questions before! I'm so grateful that you have asked them. It has been great to take a step back and look at the process. It's so nice that the region is thinking about this. It's so easy for us to neglect ourselves."
- "I think SWRC is on the right track."

- "There's an awareness and with awareness it helps to focus action in a direction. I think we're considering the right priorities."

Some of this enthusiasm comes with caution, and a [reasonable] expectation for lasting change.

- "I hope they can take this seriously. If they can do this well, then there is hope for change."
- "I am hoping that this doesn't just sit on someone's desk but goes somewhere."
- "Is this just for the show, or is it doing something meaningful? Will this be enough that they can make actual changes? I hope it gets shared."
- "The question is, what do they [the Commission] want to find? I hope they can really hear without being too defensive. If people are not willing to hear, is the bureaucracy willing to do anything about it?. It is going to be uncomfortable. People have shared already – now is the time for change."

There are a number of **recommendations** for changes with the Regional Council to increase or achieve equity. Interestingly, the process of **training search teams** is one of the few places in the research where participants speak of a call **"to be the church."** Trainings must include an understanding of sacred discernment and wider ecclesiology, that challenges search teams to consider not only what is best 'for them in their Community of Faith'.

- "It's important to understand this is actually church, not a business practice. It's not just about what is illegal to ask. …We need to focus on our priority; who and why we need people to work in partnership. We are dealing with people's lives and souls."
- "Training must underscore that the search committee is accountable to the Community of Faith itself, but also to the larger church. It is helpful to empower the search committee, knowing that they are also charged by the wider church to reflect the ethos, polity, values, creeds [of the whole United Church]. It is also their role to push those boundaries of the local Communities of Faith, not just go through the motions."

On a more concrete level, **the search team training needs to be expanded** to include how to effectively use ChurchHUB, the church's expectations and policies on ChurchHUB use, and Admissions. While some recommend adding more training content about equity with a theological component, others recommend that **search teams** - or at least their chair(s) - **participate in the UCC Racial Justice training** (offered through United-in-Learning) that is mandatory for ministry personnel.

- "They will say that's too much, but I think that's a reasonable requirement."

Beginning with and revisiting equity in the search team training allows for liaisons to more accurately gauge equity-awareness. Ideally, this also helps search teams resist the temptation to compartmentalize equity only with orientation training.

- "Liaisons are most effective when they address bias right at the beginning. ... The initial training session is the major point. If you have a reasonable amount of sensitivity, you get a feeling of where the committee is at."
- "We should address it at the first meeting; in a conversation of ground rules and equity. This becomes a framing piece, and a reminder that the liaison's lens is going to be focused on equity throughout. I do this by explaining the word, what it means, a bit of

engagement of it, and the 'Naming your Privilege' exercise. There's that week of getting the big master list [of applicants], so always before they walk away and do that, there's an equity refresher."

This training could be strengthened if **search teams each identify a person** to maintain [monitor] the equity going forward by raising questions and reminders. While **tracking demographics of applicants and interviewees**, called/appointed ministry personnel, may seem bothersome or controversial, accurate information on which to reflect will provide valuable feedback to the search team and cumulatively to the Regional Council.

Search teams would like a **review of handbooks** for outdated information, and a better **platform for communicating** between Regional Council, local Community of Faith and Candidate. It was unclear if this was a modification of ChurchHUB or a separate avenue.

Liaisons would **like more resources or opportunities to share resources** they have found or developed. In particular, visual or concrete ways to understand (and thereby explain) bias, conversation in their training related to equity, and attention paid to training new liaisons. They appreciate hearing firsthand stories, having a time of lament, and then empowering liaisons to go back and share these stories with their search teams to increase awareness. Liaisons also recommend more theological grounding about equity and thinking of how we are practicing God's inclusion.

- We need to exercise our equity muscles.

These muscles can weaken when there is no accountability.

- "We should have accountability of the liaisons themselves, on how they offer the training to search teams, rather than 'This is the training, you go out and do it'."

To this effect, a simple **liaison report** should accompany the demographics and self-evaluation of the search team, submitted to the Pastoral Relations Commission, alongside motions or other paperwork after a search is complete.

There were few suggestions for elaborate **new policies**, but **the Pastoral Relations Commission needs to make explicit** the role a previous or current minister in the search process, clarify the equity role of liaisons beyond training, and develop best practices for when applicants are known to a Community of Faith.

- "The documentation outlines how to deal with bias of candidates based on the protected grounds, but what about the bias of 'I know her so I'm more comfortable with her, I don't know this other candidate as well'."

While outside the jurisdiction of the Pastoral Relations Commission, the Regional Council needs to seriously consider how it will **diversify its staff complement**, reflective of the surrounding diversity in Shining Waters. Using an equity-based framework, that recognizes systemic and structural biases, the Region needs to equip equity-seeking candidates to develop the skills and experience needed for regional ministry positions. An intentional multi-year, phased, plan will have the most chance at success.

The other major recommendation is to develop a **system of mentorship / pairing / support / advocacy at all stages of the pastoral relations process**, including the first year of pastoral relationship.

- "Is there a way that someone who is searching, possibly racialized, could be encouraged, to find someone who relates to your background, and can make suggestions. Could there be a resource for the minister? And in different languages."
- "Would have liked to have a mentor through the search/negotiation."
- "When people leave an interview, should have someone to talk to, who was there."
- "Need for someone to help ministers practice, to close the loop of inequity."
- "Someone in an advocacy role. We've spent so much time thinking about how to prepare search committees in looking for someone, but we've not spent time supporting our ministers who are looking. We need some more support for that."
- "Need to offer transition advocacy. Because sometimes if you get through the interview and through the door, the church hasn't really thought about what it means to have a black clergy, or disabled clergy, etc."

This recommendation is not merely to 'reimplement' the previous liaison / Presbytery rep system, but to honestly consider how different candidates and ministry personnel could choose from available resources and the region would also reserve the right to recommend or mandate in certain situations.

5. **What the Observed Data Bears Out**

The **Pastoral Relations Commission Minutes** from January 2019 to February 2021 reflect the work of the commission, as seen by the rest of the Regional Council and the public. The minutes demonstrate an efficiency to the commission's work, and conscientious commitment to record keeping. What they don't show is the extent to which pastoral relationship motions, or their terms, were questioned or discussed. Early on in the life of the commission, it **'handed over' significant authority to regional staff** (Jan 2019 - that staff be given permission to appoint liaisons; Feb 2019 - that staff can sign Pastoral Relations Commission paperwork). While this may be efficient in many situations, it does raise questions about the ability of the commission to intervene, make decisions with the full picture, or notice trends. **Liaisons likewise have been given significant responsibility** and authority to act independently (Jan 2019 - liaisons have authority to approve Community of Faith profiles; Dec 2019 - liaisons have authority to negotiate collaboration agreements between Communities of Faith; Feb 2020 – it is the role of the liaison to monitor the honesty of Communities of Faith about their sustainability). Since liaisons communicate directly to staff, it is not clear if the commission has a solid understanding of the work being done on their behalf, nor the opportunity for input or raising concerns. Given the frequency that we saw questions of equity and liaison roles, this is an area that needs further attention, clarification, and discussion. In this way, there is a **disconnect between the work of the liaisons with the staff, and the work of the commission with the staff**. While the role of liaisons has been under discussion in the commission, there needs to be a comprehensive list of liaison responsibility and limits, and improved communication between liaisons and commission that does not rely on staff as an intermediary.

Over the course of the Pastoral Relations Commission's time, there has been conscious attention to questions of equity and anti-racism. This is seen in the most recent guest speakers and discussions (and project!), but it is not clear **if "concerns raised" then translate into policy, practical changes, or an action plan**. For example, in June 2019 – a question was raised about whether there were discrepancies in terms of call/appointment between different demographic groups. Two years later, there seems to be the beginning of an answer to that question. In those same minutes, there is concern about who is involved, or not involved, in negotiating salaries for ministers. While a few options were suggested, seemingly nothing has been implemented apart from "sending negotiating guideline to MPs", which were not mentioned by any of the interviewed participants. There was a suggestion that "Staff show comparables in the report" to the region, but again, this has not happened as far as we can tell. There is a need for some mechanism to ensure that concrete actions happen when questions of equity are raised, and that this is recorded in the commission's subsequent minutes for accountability.

The commission seems to have a decent **dedication to pastoral support for ministry personnel**. While Health, Joy and Excellence has its own advisory group, the times when feedback is reflected in the minutes, highlights the communication with the commission. In June 2019, the commission raised the issue of specific support to migrant/ethno-cultural Communities of Faith, be that by resources, connection, cluster, etc. It is unclear what has come of this concern, unless it is now being addressed primarily by the Intercultural Diversity Commission. The

support for team ministries and monthly ministry personnel check-ins - particularly during the pandemic - have been a crucial and concrete response. Going forward, it would be helpful to lay out an explicit plan of the kinds and schedule of supports, and how this will be communicated to new pastoral relationships.

The last aspect of the minutes that bear mentioning visa vie equity, is that of **policy development**.   Two policies in particular are relevant to this research. The more recent is the **Telephone Allowance** minimum for 2021, passed in January 2021. While this policy does seek to provide a fair standard, it can be a red herring compared to other aspects of renumeration. It would be helpful to have an accessible place on the Shining Waters website – Pastoral Relations Resources to post these kinds of policies so that they do not either become lost in historical minutes or only accessible by those who have inside knowledge and networks. The second policy is the **Short Term Appointments And Appointments Policy (January 2019),** and it's later cousin, the **Supply Appointments And Appointments Policy (June 2020).** In the first of these, it states "*In the new guide for pastoral relations, Pastoral Relations: Community of Faith, a clear distinction is made between short-term appointment and appointments. Short term appointments are requested when the community of faith requires ministry support while they work on their profile and search. Appointments, on the other hand, are longer-term pastoral relationship as a result of a search. This policy will help the Pastoral Relations Commission differentiate between the two types of appointments and respond appropriately.*" In this policy we see "short term" = no search, maximum 12 months, while regular "appointments" (often with the word "supply" in their names such as 'retired supply') = search, and up to 2-3 years. In the revision of this policy in June 2020 we see no mention of whether or when a search process is expected, but now the language is "supply appointments" = maximum 12 months, and "appointments" (often with the word "supply" in their names) = up to 2-3 years. This is in part an issue for Shining Waters, but likely for the wider United Church as well. As we have seen in the research already, there are certainly equity issues; who has access to appointments, when do these appointments then default to a call, how does the appointment system circumvent search processes, how does informal networking affect access to appointments, etc. It is recommended that the Pastoral Relations Commission spell out even more clearly under what circumstances a search process is required, and what is actually a 'supply appointment'. Furthermore, it is recommended that the commission lean heavily towards always requiring search, unless it is covering a time limited leave such as parental leave, sabbatical, or medical leave, or in the case of an Intentional Interim appointment, or a true "appointment" where the region is taking sole responsibility for sending a minister under particular circumstances. As more ministers choose to serve during their retirement, and fewer ministers are available, this clarity will become even more crucial to ensure opportunities exist for equity-seeking candidates.

Statistical Data and Analysis of Motions of Terms of Call/Appointment

This section highlights observations from an analysis of all of the motions regarding calls and appointments over the last 21 months, from June 2019 to February 2021. This timeframe was chosen so that it was consistent with the original plan to consider the last 18 months, plus adding June since many positions begin in July, and adding January and February of 2021, to account for any delays in paperwork due to COVID.

When **presenting the Pastoral Relationship Data**, it is important to remember that none of this data includes pre-existing calls or appointments; those ongoing, those which ended during this timeframe or those that did not require renewal. From June 2019 to February 2021, the Pastoral Relations Commission approved **130 motions for appointments or calls**. If we remove duplicates (re-appointments) for the same person, with the same terms, in the same pastoral relationship, there were **108 motions for distinct pastoral relationships**. If we remove all re-appointments (with the same terms) during this time period, the Pastoral Relations Commission considered motions for **69 new pastoral relationships**. As is true with most statistical analysis, the results are as much based on your question as your data. Data will be presented for all three above sets, broken down into **Terms**, and significant equity observations, **Demographics**, and significant equity observations, and the **Analysis between Terms and Demographics**, again with significant equity observations. For the purpose of this research, I have chosen to focus the Analysis between Terms and Demographics only on the 69 new pastoral relationships approved during this timeframe. This allows the research to focus on the **actual work of the current Pastoral Relations Commission**, **and not merely those they have inherited** from a previous system.

A note on confidentiality and reading the charts. Many cultures have norms about explicit discussions of money or salary. All of the data presented here is public knowledge – from minutes that are posted on the Region's public website, or from direct experience (in the case of basic demographic data). The language of "Assumed Gender" and "Assumed Race" are used as this is from the Region's experience and knowledge of the person but may not reflect their current identity or presentation. In this analysis, no names are used, nor are individual situations singled out in case studies. Like the previous section, you may suspect you know someone referred to, but this is not always the case, and it misses the point of looking at wider trends in the data.   There are times when the percentages do not necessarily line up, due to rounding error. Again, the minor details are not as important as the trends they show.

Terms of Minuted Calls / Appointments

	All Motions		Each Pastoral Relationship		New Pastoral Relationships	
total number	*130*		*108*		*69*	
type of position						
Appointment-DLM	3	2%	2	2%		
Appointment (1st time)	11	8%	9	8%	11	16%
Appointment-renewal	35	27%	22	20%		
Appointment-supply	15	12%	14	13%	16	23%
Appointment-student	18	14%	14	13%	8	12%
Appointment-retired	14	11%	14	13%	10	14%
Appointment -adjust	7	5%	6	6%		
Call-adjust	3	2%	3	3%		
Call	24	18%	24	22%	24	35%
Was there a Search?						
Yes	43	33%	42	39%	40	58%
No	87	67%	66	61%	29	42%
Hours of the Position						
6-13	12	9%	11	10%	7	10%
14-19	11	8%	9	8%	8	12%
20-25	45	35%	39	36%	26	38%
26-39	21	16%	16	15%	7	10%
40	41	32%	33	31%	21	30%
Length of Position						
1-5 months	12	9%	16	15%	11	16%
6-11 months	44	34%	25	23%	21	30%
12 months	42	32%	35	32%	12	17%
13+ months	7	5%	7	6%	3	4%
unlimited/call	25	19%	25	23%	22	32%
Salary % Above						
0%	64	49%	55	51%	32	46%
0.1% - 9.9%	27	21%	25	23%	18	26%
10% - 19.9%	19	15%	14	13%	10	14%
20%-29%	13	10%	10	9%	5	7%
30%+	7	5%	4	4%	4	6%

	All Motions		Each Pastoral Relationship		New Pastoral Relationships	
total number	*130*		*108*		*69*	
Continuing Education						
1-1474 (minimum)	118	91%	99	92%	63	91%
1475-1999	5	4%	3	3%	2	3%
2000-3000	7	5%	6	6%	4	6%
Telephone						
100-599	25	19%	21	19%	13	19%
600	51	39%	42	39%	27	39%
601-799	16	12%	13	12%	9	13%
800-1199	28	22%	23	21%	14	20%
1200-1560	10	8%	9	8%	6	9%

Significant Observations from Terms, which could Impact or Signal in/Equity

Type of Positions
- Calls were only 18% of all motions
- Calls were only 35% of new pastoral relationships since June 2019
- 27% of all motions were renewals of existing appointments
- 7% of all motions were adjustments to existing appointments
- 14% of new pastoral relationships were filled by retirees

Was there a search?
- Only 33% of all motions involved a search
- 58% of new pastoral relationships involved a search
- 42% of new pastoral relationships did not involve a search

Hours of the Position
- 35% of all motions were for a 20-25 hour position
- Only 32% of all motions were for fulltime positions (40)
- 38% of new pastoral relationships were for a 20-25 hour position
- Only 30% of new pastoral relationships were fulltime positions (40)

Length of Position
- 6-11 and 12 months were the most common appointment length, of all motions
- 19% of positions were for a call/unlimited length, of all motions
- 30% of new pastoral relationships were for a 6-11 months appointment
- Only 32% of new pastoral relationships were call/unlimited length

Salary Percentage Above
- Nearly half (46-49%) were paid minimum for their category
- 21-26% were paid 0.1 – 9% above
- 10-14% were paid 10-19% above
- 7-10% were paid 20-29% above
- 5-6% were paid 30% or more above minimum
- There was little difference between "all motions" and "new pastoral relationships"

Continuing Education
- 91% are paid the set minimum (up to 1474)
- 5-6% are paid between $2000-$3000
- There was little difference between "all motions" and "new pastoral relationships"

Telephone Allowance
- 58% are paid $600 or less
- 20% are paid $800-1199
- 9% are paid $1200-$1560
- There was little difference between "all motions" and "new pastoral relationships"

Demographics of Ministry Personnel in Minuted Calls or Appointments

Please note, this is for the whole region's new pastoral relationships during this time, not specifically the participants of the interviews, focus groups, or surveys in this study. There is some overlap of course, but their demographics are explained in the Preamble section.

	All Motions		**Each Pastoral Relationship**		**New Pastoral Relationships**	
total number	*130*		*108*		*69*	
Assumed Race						
Racialized-Asian	18	14%	18	17%	10	14%
Racialized-Black	8	6%	6	6%	3	4%
Racialized-South Asian	5	4%	3	3%	2	3%
Racialized-Latino/a	4	3%	4	4%	3	4%
Racialized-West Indian	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%
Racialized-Southeast Asian	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%
Non-Racialized/White	93	72%	75	69%	50	72%

	All Motions		Each Pastoral Relationship		New Pastoral Relationships	
total number	*130*		*108*		*69*	
Assumed Gender						
Female	61	47%	48	44%	32	46%
Non-binary-various	2	2%	2	2%	2	3%
Male	67	52%	58	54%	35	51%
Stream of Ministry						
Admissionand	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%
Designated Lay Ministry	5	4%	4	4%	0	0%
Diaconal Ministry	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%
Ordained Ministry	55	42%	49	45%	37	54%
Ordained-Intentional Interim M	3	2%	2	2%	0	0%
Ordained Ministry - Retired	41	32%	33	31%	19	28%
Other (non-UCC clergy)	5	4%	4	4%	1	1%
student – Designated Lay Min.	5	4%	4	4%	2	3%
student – Diaconal Min.	2	2%	2	2%	1	1%
student – Ordained Min.	11	8%	8	7%	7	10%
Salary Scale Category						
Step 1	7	5%	3	3%	6	9%
Step 2	10	8%	11	10%	3	4%
A-B	18	14%	14	13%	11	16%
C-D	11	8%	10	9%	4	6%
E	17	13%	17	16%	14	20%
F	67	52%	53	49%	31	45%
Other Known Equity Factors						
Speaks with an Accent	27	21%	23	21%	13	19%
Various-queer-identified	15	12%	13	12%	8	12%

Significant Observations from Demographics, which could Impact or Signal in/Equity

Assumed Racial Identity
- 72% of pastoral relationships were with a non-racialized/white ministry personnel
- 14% of pastoral relationships were with a racialized-Asian ministry personnel
- 4-6% of pastoral relationships were with a racialized-Black ministry personnel
- 3-4% of pastoral relationships were with a racialized-Latina/o ministry personnel

- 3-4% of pastoral relationships were with a racialized-South Asian ministry personnel
- 1-2% of pastoral relationships were with various racialized ministry personnel (Southeast Asian and West Indian)
- *In most of the analysis, these last three sets are grouped as racialized-various, because of numbers and confidentiality*
- There was little difference between "all motions" and "new pastoral relationships"

Assumed Gender
- 51% of new pastoral relationships were with male ministry personnel
- 3% of new pastoral relationships were with various-non-binary ministry personnel
- 46% of new pastoral relationships were with female ministry personnel
- *In some of the analysis, these last two sets are grouped because of numbers and confidentiality*

Streams of Ministry
- By far, new pastoral relationships were arranged with ordained ministry personnel – 54% by ordained ministers, 28% by retired ordained ministers, 10% by ordination-stream students
- 8% of all motions were for designated lay ministry personnel – half for designated lay ministry students, half for recognized designated lay ministers.
- Only 2% of new pastoral relationships were served by diaconal ministry personnel - !% student and 1% commissioned
- 6% of all motions were appointing non-United Church ministry personnel, in admissions or mutual recognition or special circumstance.
- 14% of all motions were appointing students.

Salary Scale Category (based on Years of Experience)
- 45% of new pastoral relationships are with a minister in category F
- 20% of new pastoral relationships are with a minister in category E
- 16% are in category A or B, and 13% are students
- There is a gap in those with category C and D, demonstrating that either ministers are chosen at the beginning of their ministry or once they have significant experience.

Other Known Equity Factors
- 19% of new pastoral relationships were with a minister who is identified as having an accent
- 12% of new pastoral relationships were with a minister who is known to be variously queer-identified

<u>Relationship Between Terms of a Call/Appointment and Demographics</u>
- *The data is only from new pastoral relationships, and the table runs over two pages.*
- *Rose boxes express equity concern. Green boxes show possible equity progress.*

Table: position data by category (rotated landscape table)

	count	%	Gender — Male	Female & NB	Assumed Race — Non-racialized /white	Racialized Asian	Racialized Black	Racialized various	Accent	Queer- various	Salary Scale Category — Steps 1&2	Steps A-B	C-D	E	F	Stream of Ministry — DM	OM	OM-R	Admis- sion and	other/ non-UCC OM	student OM	student DM	student DLM	Search? — Yes	No
type of position																									
Appointment (1st time)	11	16%	8	3	6	4		1	4	2	2	1	2	4	4		10		1					8	3
Appointment-supply	16	23%	6	9	13	2		1	3	1	1	1	2	3	9		6	9		1				7	9
Appointment-student	8	12%	4	4	7		1				8				1						5	1		3	5
Appointment-retired	10	14%	8	2	9	1		1	1					1	9		1	10						0	10
Call	24	35%	9	15	13	3	2	4	5	4	4	9		6	9	1	23							22	2
Was there a Search?																									
Yes	40	58%	18	22	16	8	2	4	10	5	3	10	2	9	16		32	3			5			x	x
No	29	42%	17	12	24	2	1	2	3	3	6	1	2	5	15		6	16	1	1	2	1		2x	x
Hours of the Position																									
6-13	7	10%	6	1	5	2					1	1		1	5		2	5						2	5
14-19	8	12%	5	3	3	3		2	5	2			1	2	5		5	2	1					4	4
20-25	26	38%	9	15	20	3	1	2	3	3	8	5	1	3	9		7	9		1	6	1		13	13
26-39	7	10%	2	5	6			1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1		5	2			1			3	4
40	21	30%	11	10	16	2	2	1	2	2	4	4	1	4	12	1	18	1			1			18	3
Length of Position																									
1-5 months	11	16%	8	3	11				2	2	1		1	1	9		2	8					1	2	9
6-11 months	21	30%	8	13	15	2	1	3	2	1	6	3	2	5	5		10	6			3	1	1	8	13
12 months	12	17%	8	4	7	4		1	5		2	1	1	3	5		4	4	1	1	2			7	5
13+ months	3	4%	2	1	2	1									3		3							3	
unlimited / call	22	32%	9	13	15	3	2	2	4	4	4	7		6	9	1	21			1				20	2

			Gender		Assumed Race					Salary Scale Category						Stream of Ministry							Search?	
	count	%	Male	Female & NB	Non-racialized /white	Racialized Asian	Racialized Black	Racialized various	Accent various	Queer various	Steps 1&2	A-B	C-D	E	F	DM	OM	OM-R	Admission and / other non-UCC	student OM	student DM	student DLM	Yes	No
Percentage Above																								
0%	32	46%	16	16	18	9	2	3	12	1	6	4	2	7	13	1	14	10	1		3	1	18	14
0.1% - 9.9%	18	26%	11	7	16			2	1	4	2	4	1	4	7		10	3	1		4		11	7
10% - 19.9%	10	14%	3	7	10				1	1	1	2	1	1	6		6	4					6	4
20%-29%	5	7%	3	2	3		1	1	1	1		1	1	1	3		4	1					3	2
30%+	4	6%	2	2	2			2	1	1			1	1	2		3	1					2	2
Cont Ed																								
1-1474 (set min)	63	91%	32	31	46	10	2	5	12	6	5	8	2	11	22	1	26	14		1	5	1	37	26
1475-1999	2	3%	1	1	1			1	1	1		1	1			1	1						1	1
2000-3000	4	6%	2	2	3			1		2	1	1			2		2	1					2	2
Telephone																								
100-599	13	19%	8	5	5	5	1	2	2	5	2	3	1	4	3		9	2			1	1	8	5
600	27	39%	14	13	23	2	1	1	5	5	5	5	2	3	12	1	9	10	1	1	3	1	12	15
601-799	9	13%	3	6	9				1	1	1			2	6		5	3			1		7	2
800-1199	14	20%	5	9	11	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	5	6		10	3			1		9	5
1200-1560	6	9%	5	1	4	2			1	1		2			4		4	1			1		4	2

Equity Observations - Relationship Between Terms of a Call/Appointment and Demographics

Where there are numbers after a point, e.g. (7 to 2) these refer to the data from the chart above. The first number listed is the subject talked about and the second number is the comparison. For example, men were twice as likely as women & non-binary people ... (8 to 4). Where appropriate, I have added Interpretation which is my own analysis of the data.

Type of Positions
- Men were more likely than women & non-binary people to be chosen for a first time appointment (8 to 3).
- Women & non-binary people were more likely than men to be chosen for a supply appointment (9 to 6).
- Men were more likely than women and non-binary people to be chosen for a retired appointment (8 to 2).
- Women & non-binary people were more likely than men to be chosen for a call (15 to 9)

Interpretation: Women are frequently offered calls and time-limited / supply appointments, while retired appointments are most often filled by men, consistent with the gendered distribution of UCC retired clergy.
- Non-racialized/white ministry personnel were appointed in the vast majority of supply (13 to 3), student (7 to 1), and retired appointments (9 to 1). They are still prominent in call positions, but much less significantly (13 to 9).
- Ministry personnel with accents were most likely to be offered a call or first appointment, rather than supply, student, or retired appointments.

Interpretation: Racial equity and diversity is growing, but not necessarily reflected in who is chosen for 'easy entry' positions such as students and supply.
- Various queer-identified ministry personnel were represented across different types of positions.

Interpretation: In this geographic region, and since the Regional Council is Affirming, there is less discrimination against variously queer-identified ministry personnel, though still evident in participant comments.
- Only 1 appointment was offered to an admssionand.
- Supply appointments tended to be offered to those in category F (9 to 7), in addition to retired appointments.
- Call positions by far were offered predominantly to ministry personnel at the beginning, in category A or B, or once they had accumulated significant experience, category F. (9,0,6,9)
- There was no search process for any of the retired appointments (10 to 0), nor for the majority of the student (5 to 3) or supply appointments (9 to 7).

Presence of a Search Process
- When there was a search process, women & non-binary people were slightly more likely to be chosen than men (22 to 18); however, when there was no search process, men were more likely to be offered the position (17 to 12).

Interpretation: men are more likely to be suggested for or referred to an open position.
- Similarly, when there was a search process, non-racialized/white ministry personnel were 53% of those chosen, with a healthy variety of other racialized ministry personnel. However, when there was no search process, non-racialized/white ministry personnel were offered the position 83% of the time.
- Similarly, ministry personnel with an accent and various queer-identified ministry personnel were more likely to be chosen in search than offered positions without a search process. (10 to 3 and 5 to 3).
- When there was not a search process, students and ministry personnel in category F were most likely to fill the position; overwhelmingly by those who are retired ordained ministers.
- It is promising that when there was a search process, 5 students were chosen (though all from the ordination stream).

Interpretation: Search processes were more likely to result in equity-seeking groups being chosen. Shining Waters tends to prefer ministry personnel who are 'inexpensive' or very experienced. There are still a significant number of retired ordained minsters who often fill appointments.

Hours of the Position
- While full time positions were basically evenly split between men and women & non-binary people (11 to 10), women & non-binary people were significantly more likely to fill positions between 20-25 hours (15 to 9), while men were more likely to fill minimal positions of 7-13 hours (6 to 1).
- There was not a significant difference in racial distribution, across the hours of a position; however, among racialized groups, there is a higher prevalence of part time positions.
- Ministry personnel with accents were also more likely to be in part time positions, especially positions 14-25 hours.
- Students were exclusively appointed to part time positions (max 25 hours).
- Those in categories A and B were appointed to positions between 20-40 hours, and the highest correlation was with those in Category F with fulltime positions (12).
- Almost all fulltime positions were offered to ordained ministers (18), with 1 to a retired ordained minister, and 1 to an ordained stream student, and 1 to a diaconal minister.
- Retired ordained ministers are most represented in appointments between 6-25 hours.
- Non-UCC Ministry personnel were only offered positions between 14-25 hours.
- Of positions between 20-25 hours, an equal number were arranged through a search process as not (13 to 13).

Interpretation: It is concerning that 4 positions between 26-39 hours, and 3 fulltime positions were arranged without a search process.

- The majority of fulltime positions were arranged by search (18 to 3) and almost half of the positions offered through a search process were fulltime (18 to 22).

Length of the Position
- While the length of appointments for men seemed to be more evenly distributed, women & non-binary people's appointments were more concentrated in the 6-11 months length.
- Short appointments, 1-5 months, were exclusively offered to non-racialized/white ministry personnel (11), and the majority of 6-11 months appointments (15 to 6).
- Most of the student appointments offered were less than 12 months long (7 to 2).
- While there was still over-representation of category F among most lengths of positions, they were distributed relatively evenly among all lengths of positions.
- Short appointments, 1-5 months, were predominantly offered to retired ordained ministers (8 to 3), while medium appointments, 6-11 months, were offered to non-retired ordained ministers more than any other single stream cohort (10 to 11).
- The vast majority of positions 12 months or longer were arranged through a search process.

Interpretation: Lengths of positions exhibit trends, but do not carry significant equity bias.

Salary - Percentage Above
- All genders had a similar distribution of salaries offered above minimum. It should be noted that this is only based on number of people in a percentage block, rather than the distribution within them. Furthermore, this only counts new pastoral relationships.
- Racialized ministers were significantly more represented at the minimum salary scale than in upper cohorts (14 to 18, versus 4 to 31).
- Whereas the majority of racialized ministers received the minimum, with a few outliers in upper salary cohorts, the non-racialized/white ministers were more evenly distributed across the various additional salary levels.
- Ministry personnel with accents were also predominantly at the minimum salary level (12 to 1).
- Ordained ministers and retired ordained ministers were the only streams of ministry personnel to receive more than 10% above minimum salary.
- The search process does not seem to have a significant effect on negotiating salaries above minimum.

Interpretation: while it looks like gender is not a factor in salary above minimum, more analysis may be needed. Racial identity does appear to be an equity factor in salaries.

Continuing Education
- Of new pastoral relationships, the vast majority received minimum Continuing Education amounts (91%), and this was reflected evenly between all genders.
- Continuing education did not differ significantly visa vie race or accent.

- A few of the highest amounts for continuing education were for pastoral relationships with students / recent graduates, which may be a Community of Faith's commitment to their extra educational expenses.

Telephone Allowance
- Female & non-binary ministry personnel's telephone allowance was more often in the middle ranges (600-1199), whereas male ministry personnel's allowance was slightly more evenly distributed to the low and high ends.
- Telephone Allowance did not differ significantly visa vie race or accent or sexual orientation.
- Those who received $800 or more in telephone allowance were more often in categories E or F (15 to 5).
- Those who received more than $600, were all from the ordained stream; students, retired, or active.
- Admissionands, non-UCC clergy, diaconal ministers, diaconal students, and designated lay ministry students all received $600 or less.

Interpretation: The search process may have a positive effect on higher telephone allowances. However, with the region's new telephone minimum, it is yet to be determined how this will change.

Summary

General Summary

The process of doing this research is part of a wide and long movement for equity and change. I am so appreciative of those who have engaged, by participating, advising, supporting, challenging, and those who have gone before in this ministry of equity.

The findings – as we suspected – are actually not surprising. There is bias and discrimination, based on many categories, in many forms. This information has been known widely and spoken about previously and currently. What is transformative – hopefully – about this research is the compilation of experiences, the amplifying of voices, and the calls to the Regional Council, Communities of Faith, wider United Church of Canada, and the Pastoral Relations Commission to act for bold change.

Whenever change is undertaken, it must also be evaluated. This is the nature of action-reflection, which informs our future directions. This project, and in particular the methods for engaging participants and tracking terms of pastoral relationships, must be replicated or updated, if the Pastoral Relations Commission is serious about the efficacy of their equity policies.

The Spirit is among us, folks. The work of the church is in our hands. May it be so.

Summary of Recommendations for Action

Profile and Position Descriptions

On the ChurchHUB profile, expand the categories of information requested about Communities of Faith. To include; if a congregation has a policy on maternity or parental leave, the physical accessibility of all buildings, if this position is part of a ministry staff team, and statistics on the community of faith's demographic diversity* – both as a congregation and the surrounding community. (*race, age, gender, and other applicable socio-demographic criteria*).

On ChurchHUB, request that available candidates specify their ministry interests beyond the choice of regions and time. To include: types or size of churches, communities, or positions they would consider.

On ChurchHUB, provide less demographically-identifiable information on available candidates, at a first-tier search. For example, hiding names or location.

Offer accompaniment to searching candidates requesting help or guidance to know where or how to apply; especially those from overseas or other denominations in the Admissions process, and in different languages.

The Pastoral Relations Commission direct an active role for regional council and pastoral relations staff in promoting equity throughout the application, interview, and selection stage. To include; encouraging equity-seeking candidates to apply, encouraging search committees to take the initiative with equity-seeking candidates, through one-on-one conversations and facilitating the matching.

The Regional Council organize or sponsor networking events, where candidates and search teams can become aware of each other. Search teams can then make their invitation for interviewees from that pool.

The Pastoral Relations Commission develop best practices for when applicants are known to a Community of Faith.

Search Teams

Diversify the composition of search teams, at least to be representative of the community of faith.

Educate search teams about policies, regarding applicants from denominations in mutual recognition and Admissions applicants who reside in other countries. In particular, about eligibility criteria and the financial responsibility of the Community of Faith vs. the minister for international moving costs.

Expand the training for search teams on ChurchHUB. To include; how to effectively use ChurchHUB, the church's expectations and policies on ChurchHUB use.

Strengthen the search team's awareness of the demographics of their surrounding community.

Require that search teams - or at least their chair(s) - participate in equity or racial justice training, either through the UCC Racial Justice training (offered through United-in-Learning) or through a unique program.

Train search teams in what it means "to be the church." To include; an understanding of sacred discernment, wider ecclesiology, and the theological components of equity.

Liaisons to begin with and re-visit equity in the search team training, to allow liaisons to more accurately gauge equity-awareness.

Liaisons

Authorize liaisons to have better access to ChurchHUB.

Provide liaisons with more training on ChurchHUB use.

Clarify liaison's role at the profile-writing stage.

Liaisons to intervene more often in the process of writing position descriptions; to help prevent unrealistic expectations, bias, lack of honesty, or preferential postings.

Liaisons to encourage ChurchHUB profiles and position descriptions to have less emphasis on required qualifications of a minister and more emphasis on describing the community of faith or its vision for ministry.

The Pastoral Relations Commission create a liaison policy that includes a comprehensive list of liaison responsibility and limits and clarifies the equity role of liaisons beyond search team training. This could include liaisons playing a more active and present role during the applications, interview, and selection stages, not solely as oversight, but as support and accompaniment for both the search team and candidates.

Strengthen equity resources for Liaisons and opportunities to share resources they have found or developed. To include; visual or concrete ways to understand (and thereby explain) bias, more theological grounding about equity, further conversation opportunities on equity in their training, and attention to training new liaisons.

Provide opportunities for liaisons to hear firsthand stories about equity and inequity, having a time of lament, and then empowering them to go back and share these stories with their search teams to increase awareness.

Interviews

Organize an external advocate, accompanier, or liaison, to attend interviews, especially if accommodations are anticipated.

Add intercultural and/or equity discussion topics to the standard interview questions suggested by the UCC.

Equity Monitoring

Expect search teams to each identify an equity monitor on the team to raise equity questions and reminders throughout the process.

Develop and require a process of equity self-evaluation for search teams, which is then collected by the Pastoral Relations Commission for longitudinal study. To include; how equity was enacted at each stage.

Develop and require a process of equity audit for the search process for search teams, which is then collected by the Pastoral Relations Commission for longitudinal study. To include at minimum; tracking demographic information on who applied, who was offered interviews, who was turned down for interviews, who was offered a position, with what terms and salary, and where in the region they are located.

Develop a system of accountability whereby liaisons demonstrate how they have addressed equity with search teams. A simple liaison report could accompany the demographics and self-evaluation of the search team, submitted to the Pastoral Relations Commission, alongside motions or other paperwork after a search is complete.

The Pastoral Relations Commission engage in further research and monitoring of equity experiences in ongoing pastoral relationships, beyond the first year.

The Pastoral Relations Commission [or Admissions Board] take initiative to monitor Admissions ministers' appointment dates to prevent a lapse in Canadian residency.

Develop and maintain a Regional spreadsheet of terms of appointment / call and demographic information (not names). This would be a living document with historical and current information, accessible on the Region's website or somewhere central, so that it could be accessed by ministry personnel in search or search teams.

Terms Negotiation

Develop and provide pro-active regional support to ministry personnel in the negotiation stage. To include; sharing historical information the Regional Council has about a Community of Faith on previous ministers' terms of call/appointment.

Develop and provide a set of guidelines and best practices for negotiating position terms, beyond what is available in the UCC Pastoral Relations: Search and Selection Handbook (2000).

Provide the option of a mentor or designated accompanying colleague during the first year of a pastoral relationship, to promote equitable access to information and networks.

Improve or develop a better platform for communicating between Regional Council, local Community of Faith and Candidate, on the terms and motions surrounding new pastoral relationships.

Promotion of Equity in the Pastoral Relationship

Widen the scope of United Fresh Start, to address equity issues in a Community of Faith before the pastoral relationship starts.

Develop a welcome guide for lay leaders when starting a pastoral relationship. To include; recent updates of UCC Pastoral Relations Handbooks, United Fresh Start, and Regional opportunities.

Develop and facilitate a system of mentorship / pairing / support / advocacy in the first year of pastoral relationship. To include offering transition advocacy, particularly in Communities of Faith who have not previously considered what it means to have a black clergy, disabled clergy, or other equity-seeking ministry personnel.

The Pastoral Relations Commission facilitate and require explicit equity or anti-racist modules of United Fresh Start be done, particularly in certain pastoral relationships where there is an equity-seeking minister or in a community that has diverse leadership.

Develop and provide pro-active regional support to ministry personnel in the initial pastoral relationship. To include; sharing historical information the Regional Council has about a Community of Faith, such as past schisms and landmines, and the previous ministers' terms of call/appointment.

The Pastoral Relations Commission engage in welcoming initiatives for ministry personnel in new pastoral relationships, especially those new to the Region. To include: someone from the Regional Council reaching out via a phone call, developing a Regional social media virtual map to promote ministry personnel finding each other, and developing a Regional welcome package to explain what's available from the region, groups that meet with ministers, how to connect with peers, etc.

The Pastoral Relations Commission encourage new ministry personnel to communicate with past ministers to understand community dynamics.

Pastoral Relations Commission

Develop and facilitate a system of mentorship / pairing / support / advocacy at all stages of the pastoral relations process, not merely to 'reimplement' the previous liaison / Presbytery rep system, but to honestly consider how different candidates and ministry personnel could choose from available resources. The region could also reserve the right to recommend or mandate in certain situations.
Improve communication between liaisons and the Pastoral Relations Commission, that does not rely on staff as an intermediary.

Develop a system to ensure that concrete actions happen when questions of equity are raised among the Pastoral Relations Commission, and that this is recorded in the commission's subsequent minutes for accountability.

Review UCC and Regional handbooks for outdated information and ensure that all Pastoral Relations policies (or motions that set standards of pastoral relations practice) be centrally accessible on the Region's website.

The Pastoral Relations Commission create a policy that explicitly names the role of a previous or current minister in the search process.

The Pastoral Relations Commission further clarify its Appointments Policy. To include: the specific criteria for offering short-term appointments, under what circumstances a search process is required, and what is actually a 'supply appointment'. Consider always requiring a search process, unless it is covering a time-limited leave such as parental leave, sabbatical, or medical leave, or in the case of an Intentional Interim appointment, or a true "appointment" where the region is taking sole responsibility for sending a minister under particular circumstances.

Regional Council

The Regional Council seriously consider how it will diversify its staff complement, reflective of the surrounding diversity in Shining Waters. Using an equity-based framework, that recognizes systemic and structural biases, the Region could equip equity-seeking candidates to develop the skills and experience needed for regional ministry positions, through an intentional multi-year, phased, plan will have the most chance at success.

The Regional Council facilitate and promote lay equity education / education for Communities of Faith. This education must be required, integrated, and done in healthy relationship between the Region and Communities of Faith, not just through their ministers or search teams.

Methodology Appendix

This section is available on request:

Timeline of the Research
Rationale for types of research
Development of research method
Ways of inviting participation, consent form
Amount of data collected and what was done with it
Technology used and data storage
Personnel consulted: Adele Halliday, Kim Uyede-Kai, Susie Henderson, Jody Maltby, Kathy McDonald, Marlene Britton,
Committees / groups consulted: Ministry personnel of SWRC, Intercultural Diversity Commission, liaisons
Data collected and considered:
Analysis of Minutes from PRC – motions, policies, actions around equity
Analysis of Motions from PRC – trends, demographics, discrepancies
Questions from Community of Faith Search Team Survey (12 resp to survey)
Liaison Questions (12 participated in focus group or interview)
Questions for Ministry personnel not chosen or in active search (6 survey responses and 3 interviews)
Questions for Ministry personnel in current pastoral relationships (16 interviews)