

June 16, 2021

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

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Communities of Faith Commission
Wednesday, June 16, 2021**

The Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on Wednesday, June 16, 2021 by video conference call. The meeting began at 9:34 a.m.

Present:

Chris Bennett, Carolyn Harding, Calin Lau, Amy Lee, Kevin Logie, Sandra Nottegar, Cindy Randall, Gloria Tozek (Chair)

Jody Maltby (Staff Lead), Diane Matheson, Jeffrey Dale, Susie Henderson

Regrets: Harry Ramsaran

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson welcomed everyone, and opened with Romans 8:38. Chris Bennett gave an acknowledgement of the land, and acknowledged our commitment to being a safe place for all people to gather and participate in our Region.

Members checked in.

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

Agenda

MOTION by Carolyn Harding/Chris Bennett that the agenda be approved as amended.

MOTION

CARRIED

Minutes

MOTION by Amy Lee/Cindy Randall that the Minutes of the meetings of the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council dated May 19, 2021 and June 7, 2021 be approved as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Email votes

The following decisions were made by email:

- Eglinton St. George's - accessible lift project

approved the project of Eglinton-St. George's United Church, Toronto, for the installation of an accessible lift.

approved the request of Eglinton-St. George's United Church, Toronto, to use their Manse Fund to fund the installation of an accessible lift.
- Humbercrest – leases

approved the lease between Humbercrest United Church, Toronto, and Eric Frisch for April 1st, 2021 to March 31st, 2022

approved the lease between Humbercrest United Church, Toronto, and Evan Redsky for June 15th, 2021 to June 14th, 2022.
- Kingston Road – roof replacement and TUCC loan

approved the request of Kingston Road United Church, Toronto, to replace their slate roofing with asphalt shingles including localized cladding repairs.

approved the request of Kingston Road United Church, Toronto, for a loan with Toronto United Church Council (TUCC) in the amount of \$615,358.35 for the replacement of their slate roofing with asphalt shingles and localized cladding repairs.
- Metropolitan – livestream and sound system

approved the project of Metropolitan United Church to upgrade their livestream and sound system.

Living Faith Story and Mapping Process – *Kevin Logie, Chris Bennett, Susie Henderson*
Link to Online Map

<https://edgeucc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/interactivelegend/index.html?appid=83d422301ac34870b33332b8d08211d4>

The Commission was introduced to the online tool beginning on May 19th and again on June 16th and we spent some time reviewing the preliminary maps: Number of pastoral charges and communities of faith; Indigenous communities of faith; Affirming Communities; United Church locations in 1965 and the UCC Affiliation in the census.

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SUMMARY OF MAY 19TH CONVERSATION

Here are the comments from the reflections that were recorded in the chat. They have not been edited much beyond sorting them into categories. Based on the comments, Susie has proposed some opportunities to explore further to be discussed next time.

WHAT DO WE SEE?

- I see potential
- There is lots of property in Toronto, but not where the population is growing
- Toronto has lots. Less populated have fewer.
- Concentration of communities of faith around GTA
- More potential north of Toronto
- More northern communities are spread out in comparison to the clumping in the GTA.
- I see some communities of faith are really spread out and some are really close
- Lots of water
- Our presence is not distributed proportionately to population. Most highest density FSAs (Forward Sortation Areas, postal codes) don't have UC locations
- North is stronger in UCC affiliation
- Not surprising, but generally more open communities of faith in higher income neighbourhoods
- Some church deserts in suburbs of TO
- More WASP (white Anglo-Saxon protestant) in the north
- Older in the north
- Rural in the north
- Concentration of communities of faith in Toronto does not reflection affiliation
- Valuable resource for communities of faith

SURPRISES?

- Low number of Affirming Communities
- Low level of people who identify as UCC especially around Barrie

CONNECTIONS?

- Love how the layers work
- Shows us information related to people who are not represented in our own data -- shifts the echo chamber of talking to ourselves
- Household income in the north is less, how does it intersect with age
- Interesting to see where there are pockets of higher income
- Wealth concentrates as you move south
- North higher age and lower income

WHAT ARE WE CURIOUS ABOUT?

- How many communities of faith are viable?
- How do we map online communities! Churches are wondering how to better serve everyone post zoom?

- How do we engage people outside the catchment area? how does it fit? Doesn't follow the rules for congregations?
- How does the beyond border/boundary population connect and identify -- this is our COVID experience -- now what?

WHAT'S MISSING?

- COVID context last 15 months has changed the game in so many ways
- What are the needs in the communities that aren't on these maps?

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR WORK?

- How can this information help us direct strategy?
- Looking at the forest rather than trees, helps us understand where to direct resources, expand mission.
- Helpful to have demographics related to new ministry proposals
- As we look at amalgamations and collaborative ministries I can see ways to use the map as a reference point
- Edge can do individual congregation reports as a service
- Demographics are great resources for the church's living faith story. But most importantly we can use it for the expansion of church mission. It already puts the information together.
- How can we connect our mission with the community? This is good and useful.

MOVING FORWARD

- Are there some categories/sub-groupings that would be useful to see on our map for future conversations?
 - Existing relationships: Clusters; Collaborative Ministries
 - Affinity groups? Population density? (small/medium/large) New/emerging ministries? Ministries with particular populations?
- Shall we take a deeper dive into the research related to affinity with The United Church and religious engagement in general?

SUMMARY OF JUNE 16th CONVERSATION

Reflections included the following:

- Disconnect between locations and population growth;
- Density and wealth more concentrated as you move south
- There are a number of places without UCC presence
- Older population in the north with higher UCC affiliation
- Recognize COVID landscape not reflected here
- Wondered how we can use this work to direct strategy.

REVIEW POPULATION MAPS

The Commission spent some time reviewing the population maps: Average Sunday attendance; Population; Age; Seniors living alone; People per household; Children Per Household; United Church affiliation; No Religious affiliation.

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Here are the comments:

- There is a high percent of seniors living alone in Muskoka area and pockets in GTA -- more dispersed that previously thought
- Thinking more about seniors, where the percentages are lower, does this mean there are fewer seniors living there or that fewer of them are living alone?
- What does the percentage under Language at home mean?
- Dynamic between age and children -- surprised that downtown Toronto has so many young people
- Destination churches go beyond geography
- Can we map demographic make-up of congregations?
- COVID has changed the demographic, attendance beyond geographic borders and generally less geographic based – let’s explore that in the future
- What is the criteria for the base map in terms of what’s included there and what isn’t?

MOVING FORWARD

- Sandra, Kevin and Susie will read the article on Religious Nones and report back, <https://www.cmacan.org/religious-nones/>
- We will continue to think about opportunities to create affinity groupings – that could include opportunities for people to work together, or lenses to see particular dimensions on the regional map
- Next time: maps on property and wealth; joint conversations with Pastoral Relations on Ministry and Intercultural Commission on ethnicity/language/immigration maps.

Funding Priorities Conversation, update – *Gloria Tozek, Chris Bennett, Jody Maltby*

Gloria Tozek and Chris Bennett reported on the conversation on May 26th. They noted that there is tension in offering funding to new applicants because it will have implications for current recipients. It can also be challenging to focus on policy rather than the needs of individual recipients.

A report went to the Executive at their meeting on June 10th. The Executive was comfortable with the direction in the report. The commission requested time to review the report so it will be revisited at the September meeting.

MOTION by Cindy Randall / Kevin Logie that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council receive the report, *DRAFT Recommendation to the Executive for a Framework for Grants in SWRC* for information.

MOTION

CARRIED

Review of Commission Mandate – Jody Maltby

Jody Maltby reported that the Executive requested that the commission review its Mandate and offer recommendations. The members asked for time to review the mandate so it will be an agenda item at the September meeting.

Property Policy – Gloria Tozek, Harry Ramsaran, Jody Maltby

- Recommendation to Executive regarding use of funds

MOTION by Kevin Logie / Sandra Nottegar that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approve the Recommendation to the Executive regarding the property policy use of funds, amended to reflect LGBTQ2S+, and forward to the Executive for consideration.

MOTION

CARRIED

- Policy regarding property development

The commission deferred a decision on this policy to consult with UPRC around a definition of development with respect to property.

- Questions regarding sale of manse

Jody Maltby reported on her conversation with the Trustees of Stouffville United Church which raised questions about the section of the Finance and Property policy related to sale of property and use of manse funds. Also, the question was raised whether the Policy regarding sale of property by a community of faith that continues to exist applies to manses or only to church buildings. The commission agreed it applies to church buildings but not to manses, which are covered by the Finance and Property policy. The commission appreciated that decisions around Agreements of Purchase and Sale for houses are closed quickly and do not wish to delay this process.

MOTION by Amy Lee / Cindy Randall that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council gives approval for congregations wishing to sell a manse to work with any real estate agent who is arms-length from the congregation. Regional approval is required for the listing price for the property. Provided the sale price is at or above the listing price, and the congregation works with a real estate agent and lawyer, regional approval is not required for the Agreement of Purchase and Sale.

MOTION

CARRIED

Jody Maltby will update the policies and bring to the September meeting for consideration. The above motion will allow Stouffville to proceed prior to the changes being made in the policy.

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- Approval of lease renewals

The question was asked whether the commission needs to review the renewal of a lease agreement where the original lease was approved. The commission agreed that if there are changes in terms, the renewal should be reviewed by the commission. If the only change in the terms is a rent increase, the congregation is not required to seek legal advice, although it is always recommended.

Jody Maltby will update the policy and bring to the September meeting for consideration.

- Consolidation to a single property policy

Jody Maltby reported that she is working on consolidating all policies related to property – both from the Executive and from the commission – into one policy. This work will continue based on today's decisions. The final version will come to both bodies for consideration.

The Commission took a 15-minute break.

Joint Meeting with Pastoral Relations Commission – debrief

The final version of the Equity report will be shared with the commission. The Pastoral Relations Commission has asked us to consider when a minister retires but continues with the same pastoral charge, is this an opportunity to review the Living Faith Story? Staff will be working on this in the fall and will bring to the commission for consideration.

Staff Updates

Jody Maltby reported that only a few congregations have provided a plan for repayment of Canada Emergency Bank Account (CEBA) loans. The requirement was to provide a plan for repayment by June 2021. Given that the pandemic continues, the commission agreed to wait until after the summer to follow up with congregations. Staff will contact congregations in September.

Jeffrey Dale reported that staff for the Camp Awesome summer program will be starting work during the week of June 21st. They are a diverse group who will be engaging with the region mostly online.

Diane Matheson reported that Knox United Church, Sutton and Virginia United Church have written their collaboration agreement and it will be considered by both congregations in July, after which it will come to the commission via email vote.

Susie Henderson reported that the Wellspring blog this month focuses on Dorothy's Place, a seniors' outreach program at Birchcliff Bluffs United Church, Scarborough that is being honoured for its work by Pride Toronto.

<https://mailchi.mp/united-church/swrc-pride-celebration-wellspring>

Shining Waters Regional Pride Celebration will be June 24th at 7 p.m.

Summer Wellspring will be lifting up experiments of having church outside as opposed to just online. If you have suggestions for the blog, please let Susie know.

Closing

The chair thanked everyone for participation and for the fruitful discussion. The commission will take the summer off from meetings unless needed. Where possible, votes will be addressed by email.

The chair offered blessings and the meeting adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

Next Meeting:

Over the summer at the call of the Chair.

September 15, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. via video conference. Diane Matheson will offer a Land Acknowledgement.

