

COMMUNITIES OF FAITH COMMISSION

The Commission's volume of activity has remained high throughout this year. With over 178 communities of faith and pastoral charges, there is a continuous flow of requests for approvals related to loans, lease agreements, sale of property, governance changes, property development, collaboration agreements, etc. In response, the Commission has formed task groups –for review of requests for loans, leases, and review requests related to governance. These task groups can review requests between full Commission meetings thereby giving communities of faith a quicker response and allowing the full Commission meetings to focus primarily on policy questions.

The final report on the community mapping process begun in 2020 was received in February 2021. The Commission has begun examining the material and learning how to make best use of this strong, inter active-resource. Possible application of this data includes informing decision- making on a case-by-case basis, enabling the direction of resources to emergent needs or new opportunities, supporting communities of faith in the development of their Living Faith stories and perhaps other areas we haven't recognized. We also see this community map as a valuable resource for other Commissions within the region.

In March, Rev. Christine Smaller the first Chair for this Commission received a Call that meant she had to relocate outside our region. We are very grateful for her dedication and leadership during such an important transition period from the presbytery structure to the new region. Gloria Tozek was elected as the new Chairperson. It was also decided to implement a Vice-Chair position in order to support the current Chair and to provide continuity of leadership. Chris Bennett was elected into this new position.

The creation of the United Property Resource Corporation by the region (UPRC) was an important change for the Commission given that much of our work relates to property. UPRC has been established to bring development and property management expertise to the region and, more importantly, to communities of faith who are working through property decisions. Presentations from UPRC and discussions have helped us build a good working relationship and we anticipate an exciting ongoing partnership to ensure the best possible property development results both for the communities of faith, their local community and the United Church as a whole. The Commission is currently developing new policy related to property development to give guidance to both communities of faith and UPRC.

Commission representatives along with members of the other Commissions and Committees of the region participated in the sometimes-difficult discussion about multi-year funding and funding priorities. In our environment of limited funds, there is a tension between the desire to offer funds to new applicants and concern for the impact on current recipients. A report has been submitted to the Regional Council Executive.

Staff is currently working on behalf of the Commission to consolidate all policies related to property. This will make it easier for Communities of Faith to access information relevant to their situation.

We are looking forward to an exciting year ahead as we review our strategic plan and related priorities based on our three years of experience and in light of the creation of the Intercultural Diversity Commission and the Social and Ecological Justice Commission.

Respectfully submitted by
Gloria Tozek, Chair