

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMISSION

*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*

(Galatians 3:28)

I chose the scripture from Galatians to offer a reflection about what we have been through as a Pastoral Relations Commission (PRC) in this past year. The scripture speaks of a longing for equity, equality, for justice in all that we are called to be and do. Paul speaks to barriers that need to be broken down in light of being a new people in Christ. This year, the PRC set out to fulfil an equity goal with the assistance of Marcie Gibson. More will be shared about this report later on. In these now familiar days of Shining Waters Regional Council (SWRC), and having to wade through a pandemic, the notion that we are all one in Christ Jesus is something we have had to discover in a new way, trying to align ourselves with what will be.

The purpose of the PRC is to “provide support for ministry personnel throughout their ministry, including equipping, covenanting, pastoral relationships and retirement. ... We set policy and give direction. ... We are responsible for: recognizing a new pastoral relationship by entering a covenantal relationship with it; living in a covenantal relationship with ministry personnel. We are responsible for licensing licensed lay worship leaders. We are responsible for co-operating with communities of faith in recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing, and covenanting with ministry personnel and communities of faith; ending calls, appointments, and covenants with ministry personnel and other staff; and appointing a Regional Council liaison officer to assist a community of faith in pastoral relations matters at designated times. The PRC offers support to retirees and celebrating retirement. We are also responsible for encouraging and supporting ministry personnel toward health, joy, and excellence in ministry practice; and assisting with informal conflict resolution processes. This responsibility is shared with the Community of Faith Commission.” (Terms of Reference, Pastoral Relations Commission)

Currently, the PRC meets monthly on Zoom. Once again, our June meeting was shared with the Communities of Faith Commission. At each of our meetings we approve a list of calls, appointments, and at times license those needing to administer the sacraments. We also receive the staff report on liaisons and pastoral charge supervisors. Some of the other highlights from our meetings have been:

- a) Decided that telephone allowance for Ministry Personnel be set at \$800 for 2021 regardless of full or part time appointments.
- b) Donna Bowman-Woodall and Beth Moore represented the PRC at a SWRC planning and priorities meeting in February.
- c) A request was received from La Table des ministères en français regarding authorizing, accrediting and supervising Licensed Lay Worship Leaders (LLWL). A decision was made that Shining Waters recognize the Education and Resources Committee of the French Ministries Table as the commission to accredit and supervise French licensed lay worship leaders (LLWL) in SWRC; and that a bilingual LLWL from La Table may provide services

in Shining Waters Region upon being approved by La Table as a LLWL and upon Shining Waters being provided with that approval.

- d) A task group consisting of Liz Mackenzie, Robin Pilkey, Paul Stott, and Donna Bowman-Woodall prepared a draft of the GC44 Salary Equity Proposal which was approved and forwarded to SWRC.
- e) The PRC encouraged communities of faith to offer their ministry personnel (MP) an extra paid week of holiday in this pandemic year recognizing how stretched and stressed MP have been.

A major part of our work this past year has been developing a process to assist us in working through our goal in response to the invitation of the Equity Committee of the region.

We set a goal to collect data on the pastoral relations process from entry point to the end of the first year answering this question: How does unconscious racist/sexist/ableist bias hinder or create barriers for ministers in the congregational setting? Who is chosen? Are there differences in the terms of the pastoral relationship between ministers who are white and all other racialized ministers and why? We also looked at that question for the LGBTQi community. What is the experience of racialized, BIPOC, differently-abled and LGBTQi ministers after one year on their pastoral relationship? How does unconscious racist/sexist/ableist bias affect their health, joy, and excellence in ministry?

In order to achieve the goal, we set out to select a researcher to help us answer these questions. Marcie Gibson was the successful candidate. At the same time, we offered the position to Marcie we also formed an Advisory Group (AG) to work with her. Liz Mackenzie, Lawrence Nyarko, Robin Pilkey, and James Ravenscroft, were appointed as the members of the AG. The AG met regularly – every two weeks and kept the PRC up to date on the progress of the report.

The PRC decided that we would engage in some equity training. Starting in January, we heard from guest speakers, including Rev. Cindy Bourgeois who shared some of her experience in finding work as a transgender person; Adele Halliday, Anti-racism and Equity Lead at the General Council Office who outlined the initiatives that are either under way or planned for the next few years, and Commission member Lawrence Nyarko spoke about his experience as a racialized minister in The United Church of Canada and Shining Waters Regional Council.

The PRC received the Equity Goal Research Project (EGRP) final report in June where Marcie Gibson was present to walk us through the report. The report was then shared at the same June meeting with members of the Communities of Faith Commission (CFC), the Executive Committee, General Council Office staff, and others.

Currently the PRC is working on sorting through the 50 recommendations that came out of the EGRP and determining a way forward for these recommendations. I want to offer a special thank you to Marcie Gibson, members of the PRC - William Haughton (ordered); Barbara Hendren (lay); Liz Mackenzie (ordered); Beth Moore (lay); Lawrence Nyarko (ordered); Robin Pilkey (lay); James Ravenscroft (ordered); Paul Stott (lay); Donna Bowman-Woodall (ordered); Todd McDonald and Dale Hildebrand for this extraordinary year for the PRC as we moved ahead with

our equity goal. Your willingness to give so freely of your time, expertise and diverse perspectives is greatly appreciated.

Thank you to everyone who has served as a liaison and pastoral charge supervisor in this year. Your support, service and care in assisting the ministry of SWRC has been most appreciated.

This will be the final report I submit to the SWRC on behalf of the PRC. My time as chair ends at the rise of the AGM. I am grateful to have been at the helm through this time of transition from conference to regional council. The ministry of the PRC and the work of the chair is supported by a faithful and dedicated staff team. I offer my heartfelt thanks to Donna Rutz, our staff administrative support who keeps us on track, making sure paperwork is organized and for her constant support, especially in my role as chair; to Rev. Todd McDonald, and Dale Hildebrand, our Pastoral Relations Ministers, whose friendship, wisdom, advice, and care has supported me beyond measure.

The way ahead for our commission will be to maintain and respond to directions from SWRC and the General Council as we continue to support the varied ministries of our ministry personnel through the new lens of the equity report. We look forward to serving in these changing and challenging times.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrew Comar (Rev.), Chair