

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT OF SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good", 1 Cor 12:7

Regional Meeting Report

Our regional meeting theme for this year is *for the common good*. This has been a challenging second year for the regional council, communities of faith and The United Church of Canada. We continue to walk through the pandemic together and hopefully we will soon move to a post-pandemic chapter. Staff and volunteers have worked countless hours, preparing, changing, experimenting, and succeeding in continuing as Church in new and creative ways. As an Executive, we have heard stories of sacrifice, perseverance, hope, success and also deep fatigue. We have also heard stories of worry, stress, frustration and struggle. As a region, as community, we give thanks, we continue to be on a long journey together; we celebrate the resilience of our churches and the expression of the Gospel in many new and creative ways. Our pandemic experience raises many questions about how we approach ministry, how we serve each other, and finally our role as a Church in society.

Connecting within our Regional Council

Although this past year many of our communities of faith, outreach ministries, and camps have struggled with meeting in person, our ministry has continued! Folks have used their phones, mail, video (Zoom/YouTube) for church. Many communities of faith have returned to offering in-person worship. We have continued a ministry of caring and support and we have continued in new and creative ways. Volunteers, music leaders, ministry personnel, camp staff, outreach staff, congregational support staff have all worked tirelessly.

As a regional council, the region has hosted townhall meetings for both Ministry Personnel and Lay Leaders for support, updates and education. Our website continues to be a key tool for communication within our regional council. Many local and a few regional networks and local groups have also met to connect, learn, challenge, listen and work together.

Work of the Regional Executive

Our Executive meets monthly (with the exception of the summer) and does the work of the regional council when our region is not meeting (C.3.1.1). Often the Executive has a very full agenda which includes oversight of the regional commissions, regional finances, regional policy, regional meeting, emerging work, and the Executive Minister and staff.

The draft 2023 budget will be presented at our regional council meeting. This past year's spending reflects an unusual year with Covid-19. Staff travel has been down dramatically but support to communities of faith increased. We have also created a 5-year budget projection for 2023, a requirement of our bylaws, to be updated yearly. The 5-year projection will be reviewed at our regional council meeting.

Monthly Work of the Regional Council Executive

If you are interested in a detailed account and overview of the work of the regional council Executive, please see the Digest of Actions, which will be received for information at our regional council meeting. The digest offers an itemized account of the regional council Executive since our last regional council meeting. It also gives you an idea of the monthly variety and work of our Executive. We have also added a new link to our webpage which offers a close look at our finances, including audited statements as they are completed by the auditors, in one location. Covid-19 has slowed our audits as the auditors prefer in-person meetings. Our regional council should be fully up-to-date with audits in the near future.

Working towards Right Relations, Anti-Racism and Equity

The United Church of Canada is working towards becoming an anti-racist institution. For the United Church it means encouraging the General Council office, regional council offices and communities of faith, and even Canadian society to pause and reflect. The United Church has allocated staffing and resources for both General Council staff, regional staff and Ministry personnel. The United Church is offering training, learning opportunities and discussion groups as part of a strategy of becoming an anti-racist Church. Practically, the Canadian Shield Regional Council and Shining Waters Regional Council staff have joined together on a one-year journey of reflecting, learning, re-learning history, theological reflection, and discussion on how to become an anti-racist Church and work towards right relationship. Staff from both regions meet together bi-weekly to talk, learn, challenge, pray, reflect, and discuss on a path toward becoming an anti-racist church.

Both regional councils have encouraged equity conversations at the Executive level, commission and committee levels of the church. The regional council continues to lift up our commitment to equity across our work. We are beginning to live into our new pattern of equity leads being named by each commission. There has been one introductory meeting of equity leads and, in the fall, we will come together again to learn together and to share plans for building our equity practices in the region.

It has been a little over one year since Shining Waters Regional Council celebrated becoming an Affirming Region!!!!

Staffing

In 2021/2022, we saw more transition of staff in our regional council. Bri-anne Swan decided to leave Shining Waters Regional Council. Bri-anne served as Minister for Social and Ecological Justice and Communication. Karen Hilfman Millson, Minister for Communities of Faith and Cluster and Network Animation, finished her contract with the regional council December 2021. I have deeply appreciated their work with the regional council.

We will not re-hire a replacement for both full-time positions and have delegated part of their work to other staff. I continue to deeply appreciate working with Jody, Susie, Jeffery, Kim, Dale, Todd, Karen, Donna, Rachael, Susan and Joan. We are blessed with incredible staff who have worked tirelessly over the past year. Thank you!!!! I am also grateful for our Executive and President Betty Lou McNabb who have provided attentive leadership throughout this year. Thank you!!!

On a personal note, I completed a sabbatical which took place between December 2021 and March 2022. It had been 10 years since my last sabbatical and the United Church has shifted significantly during this period. Part of my role at transition was to Co-Chair the United Church of Canada transition team. From transition I was invited to become Executive minister for the Canadian Shield Regional Council and Shining Waters Regional Council. This period of transition has been both exciting, stressful, energizing and exhausting. My sabbatical offered the opportunity to consider transition, the impact of the pandemic on the Church and, most of all, the potential for ministry with our new regional councils. The primary focus of my sabbatical considered what opportunities for ministry lie with the new regions. How can regional councils support communities of faith, lay leadership and ministry personnel? I also considered staffing, regional partnership and regional and denominational vision for ministry now and in the future. I look forward to sharing my insights as we walk together in the future in ministry. I am grateful in particular to Jody Maltby who provided support as acting Executive minister for both the Canadian Shield Regional Council and Shining Waters Regional Council, in my absence.

As we look forward, I give thanks for the support of my family this past year as I have mostly worked virtually. I give thanks for the many worship services I have been able to witness virtually this past year across our regional council. I give thanks to God for the grace of community, the love of and support of the Spirit and the message of God's love and grace through Jesus Christ, which has provided incredible hope during a very challenging year.

Peter Hartmans (Rev.), Executive Minister