

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

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Communities of Faith Commission
Tuesday, October 25, 2022**

The Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met for an in-person hybrid (in-person and online) joint meeting with the Pastoral Relations Commission, on Tuesday, October 25, 2022 at Lansing United Church, 49 Bogert Ave, North York, ON. The meeting began at 10:30 a.m.

Present:

Chris Bennett, Carolyn Harding, Calin Lau, Kevin Logie, Tom MacNeil, Sandra Nottegar, Eric Nyarko, Patti Rodgers

Staff: Jeffrey Dale, Susie Henderson, Dale Hildebrand, Rachael Howes, Jody Maltby, Diane Matheson-Jimenez, Todd McDonald, Donna Rutz

Regrets: Amy Lee, Harry Ramsaran, Gloria Tozek, Kim Uyede-Kai

Welcome, constituting the meeting and prayer

Chris Bennett welcomed everyone to the meeting. Dale Hildebrand gave an acknowledgement of the land. Donna Bowman-Woodall led a time of worship. There was a time of introductions.

Joint Commission Conversation - leader, Chris Bennett

Emerging from Pandemic

Susie Henderson led a facilitated discussion scanning the landscape, taking input from the members under categories of what we have lost, what we want to let go, what to nourish/plant, and what is here to stay.

Lay-Led Communities of Faith

Jody Maltby led a conversation that considered the changing context of communities of faith and our current processes and oversight for lay-led congregations. It focused on the General Council Executive proposal, GCE06 *Ministry Leadership to meet the needs of the church in the 2020s*. The discussions around the proposal revealed that this is an issue that needs to be addressed in our church. The proposal asked, might the question we are grappling with be: How do we create a structure of placing personnel that does not create harm?

She spoke about lay-led congregations in Shining Waters, what types of congregations have lay leaders, as well as the strengths in a lay-led congregation and the challenges in a lay-led congregation.

She also spoke about Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, Congregational Designated Ministry and Pastoral Charge Supervisors. The Pastoral Relations Commission trains Licensed Lay Worship Leaders and appoints Pastoral Charge Supervisors. The

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Communities of Faith Commission has oversight of congregations. Increasingly there is a rise in lay-led congregations that may be more permanent than in the past.

The 44th General Council also encourages regional councils to explore and implement ways that support rural and other struggling ministries in The United Church of Canada and that what is done at the regional councils be shared back to the national church because we have work to do as a whole church that honours a diversity of faithful forms of leadership.

The meeting took a 10-minute break.

Equity Project Goal and Plan

Paul Stott led a conversation about highlighting the equity lens for the Living Faith Story of congregations.

He spoke about encouraging equity considerations to be included in the development of the Living Faith Stories.

- Does it contain an equity statement reflective of the congregation's current practice and future vision?
- How would a LGBTQ2S+ minister read it?
- How would a differently-abled minister read it?
- How would a racialized minister read it?
- How would a female minister read it?

Intentional Interim Ministry

Diane Matheson-Jimenez and Chris Bennett led a conversation about how we can be more deliberate with our resources, support, and networking for those engaged in the intentional interim ministry process. They shared an overview of how churches move through transition. Is there interest in a shared working group to review the situation and recommend directions?

Some of the questions addressed were:

What are the resources needed?

What do you see as your accountability relative to intentional interim ministry?

What do you see as a vision/opportunity?

What are we going to do about it?

It was suggested to take this away to our respective commissions and create a small working group to look at these questions as a way to support intentional interim ministry.

Some of the comments/thoughts given:

- a great tool, are we using it as a region as effectively as we could to be more strategic in the way we employ intentional interim ministers?
- there is a need to be more prescriptive as to how intentional interim ministry is used.
- there will come a time when intentional interim ministry will become inaccessible to the congregations that desperately need it. If this is a tool we value, how are we going to remedy that?

- there usually is a shortage of trained intentional interim ministers although currently we do have enough, but it could be because of a lack of energy for congregations to create a transition team, etc.
- there are patterns, so we perhaps need resources to support congregations more as they go through transition.

Supporting Communities of Faith as They Close

Todd McDonald led a conversation about support for communities of faith, (both ministry personnel and lay leaders) as they close, based on the story of Minesing United Church, including: naming attitudes/stigma and isolation that they face, challenges of dealing with practical things (assets); naming legacy, telling their story, celebrating history, planting seeds for the future, transitioning members. What's our experience? How can we help? What kind of care and accompaniment can we offer? Can we identify best practices?

Learn from endings; both good endings and those that didn't go well. Calin Lau shared a story of ending well, and the learnings from that. Dee Lawrence spoke about an ending that did not go well and those learnings.

The meeting shared with each other what about the stories of endings filled them with thanksgiving; and what new directions they hope for when considering churches that are closing.

Closing

Donna Bowman-Woodall invited people to share a gratitude and offered a blessing prayer for lunch.

Lunch Break

The joint commission gathering broke for lunch at 12:55 p.m. and then reconvened separately.

The Communities of Faith Commission session began at 1:30 p.m.

Agenda

MOTION by Patti Rodgers / Tom MacNeil that the agenda be accepted as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Minutes

MOTION by Calin Lau / Carolyn Harding that the Minutes of the meetings of the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council dated September 21, 2022 be approved as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

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Governance Task Group

The following decisions were made by the Governance Task Group

- approved the proposed new governance structure of St. Andrew's United Church, Markham in principle, pending a positive outcome of their test period at the end of the year.

Communities of Faith Updates

Bala Port Carling:

Jody Maltby gave an update on the review of Bala-Port Carling pastoral charge and requested a motion to extend the time of the review committee to present final decisions.

MOTION by Sandra Nottegar / Calin Lau that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approve the extension of the time for the Review Committee to present final decisions on the review of Bala-Port Carling pastoral charge to their June 2023 meeting.

MOTION

CARRIED

St. Paul's Brampton:

Diane Matheson-Jimenez gave an update on the review of St. Paul's Brampton and requested a motion to extend the time of the review committee to present final decisions

MOTION by Carolyn Harding / Eric Nyarko that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approve the extension of the time for the Review Committee to present final decisions on St. Paul's United Church, Brampton to June 30, 2023.

MOTION

CARRIED

Cheltenham

Diane Matheson-Jimenez gave background information on the Cheltenham community of faith and their decision to disband.

MOTION by Sandra Nottegar / Carolyn Harding that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approves the request of **Cheltenham United Church**, Cheltenham, to disband the pastoral charge as a recognized community of faith effective December 31, 2022 with thanks to God for the ministry of this congregation.

MOTION

CARRIED

There was discussion about having a closing worship service with the community of faith.

Cheltenham United Church also requested a decision from the Commission that the Cheltenham United Church property (including church building and manse) at 14309 Creditview Rd, Cheltenham be listed for sale, using the Dusk Team of iPro Realty (Brampton).

The Commission decided to table this motion in order to do due diligence and request the input of United Property Resource Corp. (UPRC) on the matter of the sale of the building and manse.

Cheltenham United Church also presented a legacy plan and asked for approval of the disbursement of 10% of any remaining financial and property-related assets as follows:

- Canadian Foodgrains Bank (15%)
- Bethel Hospice (10%)
- Caledon Community Services (15%)
- Meals on Wheels (20%)
- S.H.A.R.E (10%)
- Headwaters Health Care Centre, Orangeville (6%)
- Brampton Civic Hospital (6%)
- Georgetown Hospital (6%)
- Boston Mills Cemetery (7%)

The Commission decided to table this motion pending the decision on the disposition of the church building and manse.

The Commission did agree in principle with Cheltenham United Church's legacy plan as presented, with any final decision pending on the disposition of the property.

Lay Forums

- Debrief October 19 event

Susie Henderson gave some information and feedback on the lay reps' forum that was held on October 19th. There were 51 registered, and 47 attended. The material shared at the forum is on the Shining Waters website along with some notes.

Susie asked for feedback and thoughts for future forums from commission members.

- some people don't have internet, so include a phone number for those folks when referring people to the website;
- felt people wanted to talk to each other and connect as well as get information;
- perhaps have a forum without much agenda and more mutual conversation;
- some smaller congregations who don't have a regional rep are not engaged in the same way; hard to design something like this that encompasses all sizes and types of congregations; perhaps design something just for the smaller congregations
- needs to be a safe place for lay reps from those churches that are thriving and doing exciting things, so they can talk about what's working and not without judgment from communities of faith that are struggling. How do we create space for clusters based on what are the real needs of your community at this time?

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New Business

- Early Warning Indicators of Congregational Financial Instability – offer from SPHAERA RESEARCH | HALO CANADA PROJECT
Halo is a data collection project and reached out to us about doing a study around early warning signs, financial indicators, of congregations that are closing. The cost is \$3,000 for the report. Is this something that we are interested in exploring? would it be of use to us? What would we do with the information and how would we respond? They have done such a report for the Anglican church. Susie will get some more information and will see what the Anglican report looks like.

Workplan for further discussion and to schedule

- Joint work identified in the morning
 - work with intentional interim ministry, create a task group; to determine how we can better employ intentional interim ministers across the region; Chris and Tom are willing to work on this; will ask for a couple of people from the Pastoral Relations Commission to join.
 - property conversation
 - Living Faith stories – Fall of 2023; **with a caution not to presume to read the living faith story from another's point of view (amended in Minutes of November 16, 2022)**
 - storytelling and items around closing congregations
- Lay Forums
Will plan them one at a time; have covered some future topics, above.
- Review Service and Support and Oversight of Communities of Faith Policy
This is one of the older policies that needs review. It was suggested we identify a small group to review and revise this policy, perhaps by the Spring of 2023. We will ask Harry Ramsaran if he would participate in the small group and others are invited to join
- Joint Meeting on property with Executive
This will be a conversation around theology of property, etc. Jody will try to get an email conversation started
- Meetings for 2023
The next regular Commission meeting will be on November 16, 2022 and we will try not to meet in December unless absolutely necessary

Closing

Chris Bennett offered blessings and the meeting closed at 3:20 p.m.