

**Minutes of a meeting of the  
Community of Faith Commission  
Wednesday, January 17, 2024**

The Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on Wednesday January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024 via Zoom. The meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

**Present:** Chris Bennett, Trevor Brisbin, Carolyn Harding, Tom MacNeil, Sandra Nottegar, Harry Ramsaran, Patti Rodgers, Gloria Tozek

**Staff:** Kathleen Jones, Jody Maltby, Diane Matheson, Eun-Joo Park

**Guest:** Calin Lau – Growth Animator Shining Waters & Canadian Shield

**Regrets:** Amy Lee, Eric Nyarko, Kim Uyede-Kai

**Welcome**

There was a time of check in. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Carolyn Harding gave an acknowledgement of the land and acknowledged our commitment to being a safer place for all people to gather and participate in our Region. She then led the commission in a time of worship.

**Agenda**

**MOTION** by Tom MacNeil / Sandra Nottegar that the Agenda of the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council dated January 17, 2024 be accepted as circulated with the addition of a report given by Eun-Joo Park re: Governance Task Group

**MOTION**

**CARRIED**

**Minutes**

**MOTION** by Carolyn Harding / Trevor Brisbin that the Minutes of the meetings of the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council dated November 15, 2023 be approved as circulated.

**MOTION**

**CARRIED**

The Commission made the following decisions by email vote;

*.... that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approves the sale of 31/33 Melrose Avenue, Toronto by the Trustees of Dewi Sant Welsh United Church to SeekersGuidance Canada for a purchase price of Five Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$5,500,000.00) with a completion date of March 1, 2024 and in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in the Agreement of Purchase and Sale dated November 14, 2023.*

*.... that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approve the Church Council Structure of St. Andrews United Church, Toronto, dated March 2023 with following recommendations: Membership of the Council should include Called/Appointed Minister or Pastoral Charge Supervisor AND Terms of Office should be included.*

*.... that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approve the Governance Model of Taiwanese United Church, Toronto with the following Recommendation: Rather than Regional Designate, it should state Called/Appointed Minister or Pastoral Charge Supervisor.*

*.... that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approve the revised Constitution of Toronto Chinese United Church, Scarborough, dated February 2023 with the following recommendation: An advisory minister to be removed from the membership of the board as this is not recognized by the Manual.*

*.... that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approves the request of St. Paul's United Church, Scarborough to access \$26,775.35 from the Amalgamation Fund to renovate the gymnasium for rental purposes.*

*.... that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approves the request of Ebenezer United Church to rebuild their church building located at 5450 Ebenezer Side Rd, Tay, ON for an estimated cost of \$971,491.22.*

*.... that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approve the following*

- lease agreement between Stouffville United Church and Montessori School dated September 1st, 2023*
- funding from Stouffville United Church reserves for an amount of \$34,000 to revitalize the auditorium*
- the movement of an additional \$8,000 from Stouffville United Church reserves to cover the overspending on the electrical upgrade*

*..... that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approves the lease agreement between Runnymede United Church and Toronto Suzuki School and Lenni Jabour for three years beginning January 1, 2024.*

*..... that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approves the request of King City United Church, King City to access \$40,000.00 from the Trust Fund to pay off the CEBA loan*

The Regional Staff Lead made the following decision;

*December 18, 2023; approval of request from Royal York Road UC to access \$25,000 from manse funds for capital expenses.*

**Property Conversation**    *Tom MacNeil, Gloria Tozek, Jody Maltby*

In September, we asked the Commission to think about the theological understanding that may have informed our current policies and practices relating to property, and how this theology does or does not help us to live into our commitment, to be in right relationship with Indigenous peoples.

- how the communities of Faith Commission can support congregations to include some theological reflection when they're considering property questions
- there is a real tension between what we want to do today in terms of our theology, and in terms of having a view of property that's more aligned with the Leviticus readings
- there are some power relationships here that need to be disruptive, and we struggle with that because we're also beneficiaries of it, and can be, the source of good for us
- there are resources embedded in buildings that are critical to our future as a region and as a church
- shifting the point of view from power over to power with
- if we sell a church and it goes to low-cost housing, or it becomes a community center of some sort, that's just as in line with the Church's mission as keeping the cross on the front and keeping United church on a sign there somewhere
- it is also a matter of empowerment, so how can we empower the communities of faith that have the power to make a decision that they can see the benefit of the communities or wider communities, and empower them to think and act on behalf of the wider church and the wider community, and the whole of creation.

We offer the following as a way to begin the conversation:

1. As you are preparing to make a decision regarding property how will you express your congregation's living faith story?
2. Think about some stories and images from the Bible that are reflective of how we in our faith are called to think about property. How do they inform your conversation?
3. How can we honour our purpose as outlined in The Manual:  
The community of faith

- a) lives in covenant with the regional council with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the community of faith, and for fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant;
- b) regularly self-assesses its ministry and files the self-assessment report with the regional council;
- c) joins the hearts, voices, and resources of the community to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- d) engages in local, regional, national, and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical, and interfaith) for ministry, mission, and justice work;
- e) ministers with children and youth and young adults;
- f) honours and lives into intercultural mission and ministry; and
- g) lives in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community.

*(The United Church Manual, section B.2.1.1)*

4. How can we live into the United Church's commitment to:
  - 1) living in right relations with Indigenous peoples, and responding positively and meaningfully to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle Calls to the Church;
  - 2) becoming an anti-racist church (declaration of the Commissioners of the 43rd General Council, October 24, 2020);
  - 3) welcoming people of all ages, abilities, races, sexual orientations and gender identities, and any other forms of marginalization into, and removing barriers to, the life, work and leadership of the Region and our communities of faith.

- 
- probably no one's going to hit every one of those with every decision although, maybe one or two of those are something that a congregation might be able to elaborate on
  - the whole idea is to just start them thinking about something rather than money
  - where is the greatest impact that a congregation can make?

### **The Commission as a whole offered the following feedback**

Ownership is something that we struggle with, especially in light of some of the obligations and commitments that we are making, and should make, or have made with respect to our indigenous siblings.

How to get it to become part of our services as we go into those conversations.

Who owns the property? The trustees are the hold the property in trust for the congregation, for so long as the congregation continues to exist, if and when a congregation cease to exist the property, it reverts to the United Church of Canada. So, while a congregation exists. they are the beneficial owners of the property, but they can't make decisions without approval of the Regional Council. Before any congregation can move forward with the property in whatever direction the Regional Council, must give approval, unless the decision that they're making is under the thresholds that we have set. So, for example, if a renovation is left less than \$50,000, it does not require regional approval. If a lease is less than \$50,000 or not for exclusive use, it does not require regional approval, but for the most part any decision with respect to property does require regional approval. if a congregation proceeds with a decision without getting the proper regional approval, then, and if there is a problem as a result of that decision, then both the trustees and the governing body individuals on those could be personally liable. If there is a problem that leads to any kind of litigation.

Try to encourage people to actually begin by looking at vision and their call before actually getting into some of the legalese aspects of it.

There is within our property policy a stipulation that a percentage from the sale of property will go to a fund that is directed towards indigenous ministries.

Are these questions that we would be offering to a congregation who's considering making some property decisions? Or is this something that we're going to be offering generally to people within the region? - these were questions that we would be offering to communities of faith as they were approaching a sale or a lease.

How do we make this information accessible to those lay led congregations?

We might want to put in a few suggestions of stories and images like give examples for people to go to.

### **Governance Task Group – Eun-Joo Park**

#### **A Discussion about a governance event for lay readers - Lay Leaders Gathering**

- PowerPoint presentations to talk about governance – Eun-Joo Park
- Living Faith Story – Tom MacNeil
- Closing Prayer – Amy Lee
- Educate three people from each community of faith (chair & two board members)
- **April 24 2024 (7:30pm – 9:00pm)**
- 2/3 education component & 1/3 breakout rooms

The meeting took an all-purpose break.

Diane Matheson joined the meeting

### **Community of Faith Updates**

#### **Westmount United Church, Orillia – Jody Maltby**

Jody shared a DRAFT proposal for a way forward for Westmount United Church that the leadership team is presenting at a congregational meeting on Sunday January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The commission asked questions for follow up but in general was supportive of this path for the congregation. A couple of suggestions were

offered which Jody will share with the Leadership Team before their meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Forest Grove United Church, North York**

Forest Grove consulted 3 real estate agents, 2 of whom recommended going with the open bid process for this particular sale because of the nature of the market. When there is surplus from an amalgamation, it comes to the regional council and is distributed through our granting process.

**MOTION** by Harry Ramsarans / Sandra Nottegar that the Communities of Faith Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approves the request of Forest Grove United Church to list the property at 43 Forest Grove Rd for sale with Susan Iriarte (Royal LePage Commercial Real Estate) as the agent to manage the selling of the building and property.

**MOTION**

**CARRIED**

**Forest Grove United Church / Jubilee United Church** – *Diane Matheson*

Diane shared the draft amalgamation report and a discussion was had around this report. This relationship is about growth, connections within the community and possibilities. Date of amalgamation, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. The commission asked questions for follow up but in general was supportive of this path for the amalgamation.

Trevor Brisbin left the meeting

Diane Matheson left the meeting

**Bloor Street, Toronto**

Began their IIM January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 with Douglas duCharme. They have provided their goals to the IIM Committee. Mary Ellen Richardson is the regional rep and will come to the IIM March meeting.

**St Paul's, Brampton**

They are currently involved in a review so are not the responsibility of the IIM Committee.

**St Paul's, Scarborough**

In October the Commission has approved their request to enter into another IIM, although the IIM Committee has been unable to find an IIM minter to support them. Jim Keenan is willing and able to go to St Paul's, Scarborough although not available until December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Until that time Jim is offering to prep them for IIM with consultation. They currently have a short-term appointment with Don Gibson until April. He has yet to decided whether or not to extend his appointment.

**St. James, Etobicoke**

Began their IIM January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 with Richard Choe. They have yet to provide their goals to the IIM Committee. David Allen is the regional rep and will come to the IIM April meeting.

**Good News Stories**

Members shared good news stories from various communities of faith.

**Update Justice and Faith Formation Minister**

An offer has been extended to a successful candidate and a tentative start date will be in March 2024.

**Next Meeting** Wednesday February 21, 2024 9:30 a.m.

**Closing** Chris Bennett offered a closing blessing, and the meeting closed at 12:00p.m.