

Summary of Meeting 1, Prairie to Pine Regional Council Gathering

September 30, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. (CST)

by Bev Diebert (Living Skies Regional Council/ Tri-Region meeting team;
official minutes will be taken by Jamie Mckay and released in the Record of Proceedings.

The evening was conducted on Zoom and opened by Regional Council co-chairs Kwang Beom Cho and Lori Stewart, who welcomed the 205 participants. Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister, explained the process that would be used for the two Zoom meetings that will constitute the Prairie to Pine Regional Gathering. Tonight's meeting would be the educational opportunity to learn about the proposal (regional) and remit (denominational) that are to be considered.

The Equity and Diversity Committee, comprised of co-chairs Ken DeLisle and Jamie Miller, Liz Carter-Morgan, Cathey Day, Diane Dwarka, Alan Gershuny, Linda Rodgers, and Don Schau and staff member Julie Graham, led the gathering through the opening worship, which focused in part on Orange Shirt Day and in part on gender and sexual diversity. [Please click here](#) to enjoy the entire worship PowerPoint, including singing accompaniment by members of Knox United Church in Kenora, ON.

The Equity and Diversity Committee then introduced their proposal. Because most of the founding courts were Affirming before the change to our governance structure, [Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble](#) recognized our histories and offered the Regional Council the option of a simplified process to be declared an Affirming Ministry. By following this process, we could be declared an Affirming Ministry as early as this year. The regional council executive chose to accept this simplified process, and assigned the tasks to the Equity and Diversity Committee.

Ken DeLisle, Co-chair explained that this vision statement, needed for the Affirming process, needs to be approved by 75% of the gathered and that it will be voted on next week. The Vision Statement as presented read:

DRAFT AFFIRMING VISION STATEMENT

IN SUPPORT OF THE LGBTQI2S+ COMMUNITY

Prairie to Pine, a Regional Council of The United Church of Canada, is called to offer an open door, an open heart, an open mind and an open hand.

An open door is evidence of the belief that all people are created in God's image and are unconditionally loved by the Creator.

An open heart follows Jesus' teachings to love one another. We extend that love to all, inclusive of their ability, age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or any other human division.

An open mind calls us to continue working for justice, dignity, and the full inclusion of everyone in all aspects of the church community and society.

An open hand is a symbol of our work towards reconciliation as Indigenous and Non-Indigenous peoples, and our call to live into the intercultural global community.

We recognize the unique and diverse Communities of Faith and recognize we are at varying levels of development and capacities.

Regional Council members gathered were to be broken in to smaller groups to discuss the question: **Is there something in this vision statement that will prevent you from voting in favour of this motion?** Due to technical difficulties, the break out rooms could not happen and the discussion continued in the large group, facilitated by Shannon McCarthy and resourced by the Equity and Diversity Committee.

Comments from the Council members included:

Much appreciation for the work done by the Equity and Diversity Committee in preparing this Vision Statement was expressed. A suggestion was made that there be an addition of open table as a connection to the sacraments, and other suggestion was made about referencing open baptism, as well. A question was raised about the purpose of the statement; is it just for the affirming process or will this become the work of the Regional Council. Ken DeLisle responded that it will be both. One council member added that the open table has been more decisive than baptism and that including an open table would be more succinct than including both. Another speaker asked about including the word race, as it is currently so divisive; would the word ethnicity not cover that as well. Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister, clarified for those gathered that this statement is for the Prairie to Pine Regional Council and its affirming process. As the responses and comments on the statement slowed, the Equity and Diversity Committee closed the conversation with a reminder that other comments could be sent on to the committee by emailing them to affirmp2p@gmail.com.

The court then moved on to the Remit question. Executive Minister Shannon McCarthy explained that this is a Category 1 Remit, and so requires a vote by the regional councils (communities of faith do not vote on this remit.) If approved by a two-thirds majority of regional councils, the Executive of the General Council may declare that the remit has passed and, if so, the policy change will automatically come into effect as of March 1, 2021. [Background from General Council 43](#). This will change the wording to the Basis of Union. ([for more information on Remits see here](#)) Because it is a Remit, no comments, conditions, or wording changes may be added.

The *Current wording*: “The Order of Ministry shall be open to both men and women.”

The Question:

Does the Regional Council agree that:

- (a) the Order of Ministry be open to persons of all gender identities; and
- (b) the Basis of Union be amended to reflect this change as follows:

10.0 The Order of Ministry shall be open to persons of all gender identities.

Liz Carter-Morgan then gave a presentation using the [Gender Unicorn](#) visual resource to explain what gender identities are. It is based on how you see yourself - male/female/other; how you express your gender – feminine/masculine/other; the sex you were assigned at birth – feminine/male/other or intersex; who you are physically attracted to - women, men or other gender(s) and who you are emotionally attracted to – women/men/other gender(s). This remit asks if how you see yourself and express yourself should bar you from entering the ministry. Liz then [showed a video](#) to help explain what it means to be non-binary. Several folks from the meeting then thanked Liz for their educational and helpful presentation.

The closing worship was again led by members of the Equity and Diversity committee. The court sang *It Only Takes a Spark* (VU#289) and Cathey Day led the Prayers of the People. Rt Rev. Richard Bott’s version of the Lord’s Prayer was sung before Ken DeLisle gave a Traditional Celtic Blessing. The last hymn of the night was *You Call us Out* (VU#569). Lori Stewart and Kwang Beom Cho closed the meeting at 8:36 p.m.