

REPORTS –PROGRAM STAFF

Erin Acland
Keeper of the Archives



It is strange writing an Annual Report only six months from our last, and very delayed, Annual Meeting. In so many ways, little has changed in the last six months. I've continued to mostly work from home, and have gone into the Archives for only one day a week for most weeks. That one day is usually packed with activity as I've tried, and mostly succeeded, to keep up with reference requests. My goal for much of the last year, and likely for the rest of 2021 is to keep the Archives running as smoothly as possible during a difficult time.

Reference and Archival Accessions

In 2020, the Archives received 252 requests, which is a significant drop from the 418 received in 2019, and 451 in 2017. 230 requests were for reference assistance, and 22 requests were for records management help or discussions about donations and transfers of records to the Archives.

The drop in reference requests is a direct result of Covid-19. The Archives have been closed to in-person research since mid-March 2020, which makes it impractical for researchers to undertake large research projects. Few weddings took place, so few people needed to provide proof of their baptism, which is required if marrying into the Catholic Church. Similarly, few people were looking for proof of metis status this year, which makes up a significant portion of our baptism, marriage, and burial record requests.

While the Archives received fewer requests overall, the requests still took significant time as all requests needed to be fulfilled by me. I also spent a fair amount of time digitizing records in order to enable remote access to our collections.

For the second year in a row, I was a guest speaker at The Centre for Christian Studies and discussed Archives in the Church with their students from across Canada. For the third time, I've led the Management class for the Archival Studies MA program at the University of Manitoba, and have discussed my experiences managing an Archives as a lone archivist.

While some new fonds and collections were accepted into the Archives this year, transfers and gifts of archival records were discouraged unless the records were in danger or the Community of Faith was closing.

University of Winnipeg

Discussions continue with the University of Winnipeg about the future management and stewardship of the Archives. A Stewardship Agreement has been drafted and is being reviewed by leadership within the Church and University. It seems increasingly likely that this will be resolved before the end of 2021.

The U of W Library is pursuing a revitalization project, and is currently planning and designing a massive remodelling of the library space including the Archives.

I attend biweekly staff meetings with the staff of the University Archives, and it has been wonderful to keep socially and professionally connected during this time.

DUCC

The Archives Committee of the Diakonia of the United Church of Canada (DUCC) has reached out to me to help them build the DUCC Archives. I have attended Committee meetings, drafted a DUCC Archives Research Guide, been involved in a digital image archive project, and have hosted two archival workshops for DUCC members. I'm looking forward to the relationship between DUCC and the Archives growing over time.

Continuing Education

From September 2020 to January 2021, I pursued and obtained a Digital Archives Specialist Certificate from the Society of American Archivists. General Council provided continuing education funding for all denominational archivists in order for us to gain additional digital archiving knowledge.

*Respectfully submitted,
Erin Acland, Keeper of the Archives*

Julie Graham
Regional Minister: Justice and Communications



Greetings, kin in Christ. It is a gift to be in continued community with the people and ministries of Prairie to Pine, and I hope to keep meeting and greeting you virtually until that happy day when I can meet many more of you in person. Please don't ever hesitate to be in touch: jgraham@united-church.ca and via my home office- please ask the office for that number.

(Cherry said I had to include a photo. This is from April in Saskatoon out on the river, so you will not be surprised to see me bundled up. I know you'll all understand. Too well.)

Rebuilding and reconnecting are the theme of the year so far. It's often hard to know whether COVID or restructuring are at the root of the disconnect and isolation some are feeling. And yet, in the same breath, there are exciting new connections and ministry pathways emerging even in the midst of very difficult times.

Communications work continues in partnership with Cherry Abad, and includes the newsletter, regular website posting and upgrading, Facebook, contact list development. List development in particular is proving both important and complicated. This makes me miss presbyteries, and the immense amount of often unrecognized connecting and relationship they offered the church.

My **newsletter and social media content** prioritize some emphasis on the wider church and its resources and learning spaces. I hope this is a good accompaniment to news about the Region and its communities of faith; feedback on what you'd like to see about the wider church and partnerships (and how much) is always welcome.

Website: we continue to correct old material, develop new pages, ensure our newsfeeds are up to date, and wrestle with some persistent technical problems. We hope to have an archive of all approved Executive minutes and related Pastoral Relations and Property Commissions decisions on the website before the annual meeting.

Proposals template: To help people work through the mysterious process of writing a proposal, I wrote a template and checked it out with people who practice the gold standard of having a print copy of The Manual. [Available here.](#)

Nominating Committee connections: It has been a privilege to work more closely with this dynamic group, and to see again and again how to they respond to the challenging reality of communications networks that were seriously disrupted by the restructuring. We have focused on regular newsletter and [website communication](#), and on job descriptions, invitations, and other tools that help explain the wide range of needs and opportunities available to the people of this Region. The committee has also developed a form that allows more detailed self or other nominations, and an impressive tracking system. I remain in awe of the scope and detail of their work

Clusters and Networks remain both vital to how we do ministry, and a source of struggle. It's hard to track groups that are often very new and are not considered part of governance. Assembling even a small list has taken time and multiple staff. Cherry included all Network and Cluster contacts in an invitation to submit a report to the annual meeting workbook, and thank you to all those who submitted your stories. The updated list of Prairie to Pine Networks and Cluster is posted here, on the [Networks and Clusters page](#). It is a constant work in progress.

Clusters in particular are often struggling to hold together, or begin, through COVID, and may feel cut off from the wider church. The community they offer is vital, and I hope the Region can continue to work at finding ways to support them. Networks have an advantage of a more geographically widespread base, and many have adapted more easily to living on Zoom. But they too are sometimes finding it difficult to maintain energy and focus. When we emerge from this difficult time, we will have plenty of learnings to sort through, as we continue to make this new part of the structure work for us.

Affirming/ Equity and Diversity: It is my privilege to work with this large committee, which holds the responsibility of helping the Regional Council live into its [Affirming action plan](#) and into its commitments to intersectional justice. It has a very broad mandate, and I feel its work can be one of the paths into becoming both an anti-racist and intercultural church. As this report is being written, one of the major pieces of work is the preparation for the May 30 Affirming celebration. As someone who lives outside the physical Regional Council, I have always had deep respect for the former Manitoba NW Ontario Conference, and the Affirming presbyteries within it.

In April I worked with colleague Pam Rocker (Pacific Mountain and Chinook Winds) to hold a five-Region Affirming task group check in, and was grateful to Equity and Diversity for sending a number of representatives. All of the Western Regions are Affirming (Prairie to Pine only do far) or in the process and feel ongoing connection could help them in the sometimes-difficult task of imagining what an Affirming Regional Council might look like, and how to get there.

Intercultural: The Western Intercultural Network continues its work, which includes Kwang Beom Cho, Damber Khadka, and Bill Millar as Prairie to Pine reps on the executive. More PtoP people are always welcome! The Network will not hold a fall 2021 event, instead taking a break from big online events. However, it will continue with at least quarterly open, 90 minute intercultural “coffee/ chai” learning and conversation events. I maintain the Network list, send out occasional updates, and help with program development. I feel privileged to be part of this vibrant and diverse group of leaders.

Emerging Network connections include Guaranteed Livable Income, and action and learning related to this; the beginnings of some climate justice connection through For the Love of Creation; and possible racial justice connections, in addition to the Right Relations/ TRC and Affirming work a number of Clusters are moving forward. These are all experimental works in progress that use local, regional, and national connections to identify areas of common concern and interest and build local capacity that draws on wider resources and connections. A deep thank you to all those in Prairie to Pine who have been working at creating this new web of ministry and relationship.

Finally, a question: Holding justice in our structures: We are two and a half years into this restructuring, and I’m wondering about the place of what we might call (non-youth and young adult) program and justice work within it. I’ve been speaking with people involved in Networks and Clusters who are feeling a bit cast adrift in the new structure, especially related to justice and right relations broadly speaking. Some want a seat on the Executive. Others think this would be ineffective, but want a formal space where ideas and concerns can be brought. Others just want to know that the Regional Council still cares about justice and right relations.

Some have also asked how the Regional Council addresses emerging justice concerns, whether anti-racism, negative and positive impacts from government decisions, and more long-term engagement on concerns like climate justice, the TRC Calls to Action, poverty, and more. I wonder how we can open this conversation and begin to think about it with intention and prayer, as we live into different ways of being church.

Again, please don't ever hesitate to be in touch: jgraham@united-church.ca

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Graham, Regional Minister: Justice and Communications for Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and Prairie to Pine Regional Councils.



Judy Hare
Pastoral Relations Minister

In the structure of Prairie to Pine Regional Council enacted in January 2019, we have three committees and one commission that attend to the responsibilities the Regional Council has to establish and support pastoral relationships each from a particular vantage point as reflected by their name:

- Pastoral Relations Commission
- Committee on Ministry Personnel Support
- Committee on Community of Faith Support
- Committee on Lay Ministry/Lay Leadership Support

Each of these entities has a report in this workbook. Each of these groups receive staff support from the Regional Council Administrator, Cherry Abad and the Pastoral Relations Minister.

During these months of pandemic as Pastoral Relations Minister, I have been focusing on assisting these committees and the commission to carry out their mandates, to gather information needed to do so, to

gather relevant resources from various networks and offer resources developed within Prairie to Pine Regional Council to those networks. Some of the mandates of these committees overlap and so each prioritizes the work it will do. This early on in a new structure, there are some things that remain unassigned to any particular committee or commission and so as staff resource, I ensure that those things happen in accordance with The Manual and policies developed within this Regional Council (Licensing for Sacraments Elders, requests for Formal Association, requests for licenses to officiate at Marriages). Some policies are still in development stages. With a constituency still getting used to the new structure, and being the one staff person working from the office during this period, I have spent a fair bit of time receiving inquiries, referring someone to the person or the Committee that can respond to them and/or composing commentary for inclusion in the Weekly News or in group emails.

The pace of change and the breadth of it during these pandemic times is unprecedented and unpredictable. Even those who relish themselves as change agents or are extremely resilient may be feeling challenged. So much has changed in the way our communities of faith engage in mission and ministry (worship services and meetings on ZOOM or YouTube or via email and pastoral care using phone or curbside visits); so much has changed in the weekly schedule of ministry personnel and the skills set that they have had to develop and draw on to live out their ministry, so much has changed in the ways we connect with one another and make decisions. In addition to rules Communities of Faith are used to living within from the Canada Revenue Agency, Labour Standards, the United Church of Canada and Prairie to Pine Regional Council, there have been new and frequently changing Public Health Orders, which have impacted our lives individually and collectively as faith-based communities and subsidies and grants offered by all levels of government that have helped communities of faith unable to rely on income from fundraisers and rentals. There has been a very high learning curve for many of us but most especially for ministry personnel who are on the ground ministering to our communities of faith in the midst of the complicated grief of COVID and governing bodies of communities of faith attempting to navigate often through virtual discussions the ever-changing public health rules and their impacts. To assist communities of faith and regional councils to adjust to the current reality of pandemic times, the General Council made some temporary amendments to the Manual to better facilitate urgent and time sensitive decisions including matters related to pastoral relationships. While some matters have been placed on hold, some work continues including shifts related to the payroll system (ADP) and updating of policies, most notably the Workplace Discrimination Violence and Harassment Policy (WDVHP). The Ministry Streams Task Group that I have been a part of since 2019 continues its work looking at some proposals that came to some past General Councils about potential changes to policies and practises to meet the ministry needs in rural and/or marginalized communities of faith.

In March, the Committee on Ministry Personnel Support, aware of the fatigue in Ministry Personnel, circulated a Ministry Personnel Wellness Survey to ministry personnel in active pastoral relationships. It was a slightly modified version of one developed within Living Skies Regional Council and we are grateful for their sharing of this resource with us. The survey asked about feelings and stressors, sources of personal and professional support, changes in work expectations and resources that would be helpful to enhance the well being of ministry personnel during the pandemic. Fifty one of the ninety one clergy to whom it was circulated completed the survey. THANK YOU! The results do indicate that there are

serious signs of weariness, anxiety and stress among some of our ministry personnel but many are also hopeful and feeling a strong sense of vocation in ministry. There has been a significant learning curve and shift in the ways ministry has been offered as well as a perception that the focus has shifted to some aspects of ministry that can be more readily accomplished using technology (worship leadership and pastoral care) with more creativity and energy required to do things like study groups or outreach. Many acknowledged that encouragement and appreciation for their efforts by Communities of Faith and Ministry and Personnel Committees was a key source of support. Some were grateful for the MP2MP program that the Committee on Ministry Personnel Support implemented this past year and others found the bi-weekly Clergy Zoom connections helpful. Some were able to acknowledge things that could be of assistance to them in these pandemic times (enhanced communication and resource sharing) and some things that they anticipate needing as we transition out of the pandemic (opportunities for rest and retreat and conversation and education on the new reality – how to discern the things we have learned and wish to keep and what things from before the pandemic we wish to leave behind). We need to continue to support our ministry personnel and address their needs as time goes on.

I am extremely grateful for those who, in addition to navigating this pandemic in their own personal and professional lives in their own context, have found time and energy to share with clusters of colleagues or some aspect of the wider church structure, especially the Regional Council. I am grateful for wisdom gained and support received through increased virtual connections with colleagues near and far: Pastoral Relations Ministers, Community of Faith Support Ministers, Office of Vocation Ministers, Community Capacity Development Coordinators and General Council staff particularly in the Ministry Employment Unit. I am grateful for all who have demonstrated patience with me and the shortcomings in some of the systems within This United Church of Ours as we have and continue to navigate these pandemic times. These pandemic times have accentuated some needs and disparities within our society and within our communities of faith that will require our attention and care in the days ahead. May we trust that with Spirit's help we can journey together in hope.

*Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Judy Hare, Pastoral Relations Minister,
Prairie to Pine Regional Council*

Shannon McCarthy
Executive Minister



Here we are at another Annual Meeting, and once again it is online, it goes without saying that this has been a year like no other in our world or for the church. It is hard to believe that we have been through two 'pandemic' Easter seasons now and we are doing the work and worship of the church in ways that we never have before, we are learning and refining, discovering and connecting in new ways. As we reflect back on this time I believe that we will see that this pandemic has shifted some of our work patterns permanently.

Since our last gathering I have been asked to preach and send greetings in worship services I might not have been able to if the services were held in person and that has been a gift. I have been able to enjoy the worship leadership of so many more of you than I was able to do previously and that has been a pleasure.

Technology has continued to make the work of our Regional Council Executive, commissions and committees possible through the various lockdowns and distancing restrictions. However, as many of you can attest zoom fatigue is real and we need to take deliberate time away from our screens for our own physical and mental health. The Executive has worked hard to make good decisions and to build relationships, to discern and discuss. I want to thank them for their work, it hasn't always been easy but they have done it with grace and patience. I particularly want to thank Kwang Beom Cho and Diane Dwarka for their leadership in co-chairing the Executive. We wish Kwang Beom well as he finishes his two year term as co-chair, we have appreciated his wisdom and willingness to challenge us on how to be intercultural.

As we celebrate becoming an Affirming Regional Council this year I want to thank the Equity and Diversity committee for their work to help educate us as well as their continued dedication to ensuring our Regional Council is a place where all are included and valued.

Your Regional Council staff have continued to work through the pandemic, to provide resources and advice, to offer council and support. I want to thank them for their continued dedication to their work, their persistence in difficult times, and their patience in navigating the shifting sands of the pandemic.

As we look towards fall 2021 and 2022 I hope that we can celebrate together all that we did to continue worshiping and working together as the United Church in Prairie to Pine Regional Council, to take pride in new skills learned, difficult times shared, and the shared commitment to keeping our members and communities safe.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister

Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and Prairie to Pine Regional Councils.



Twila MacNair
Coordinator of Young Adult and Youth

Once again in 2020, I have had the pleasure of working with the Young Aadult and Youth (YAAY) Committee, whose mandate it is to organize events for the young people in Prairie to Pine Region. Although I miss the in-person gathering with the youth, it still amazes me to see the creativity, thought, and passion that our young church leaders put into the programming they provide for their peers and younger members of the regional community. I am also happy to see the participants who make the best of the programming provided, even if they'd prefer to be gathering under one roof.

Over the course of the year, my workload was more manageable than a typical year because we hosted shorter events (online) and held all our planning meetings online. For that reason, when I received calls from some CE committees and youth leaders of different communities of faith looking for resources, ideas, and opportunities to brainstorm with others to figure out together how to serve their youth and families in these challenging times of not being able to meet in person, I had time to respond. I organized a couple zoom meetings, one to practice using zoom and learning games that could be played online, and one as an opportunity for leaders from different communities of faith to come together to share ideas. I then created a Facebook group called "Prairie to Pine Reaching Children, Youth and Families" where anyone who joined could post their own ideas, or repost resources that they have discovered. Although this FB group hasn't had a lot of traffic, I do post resources on it from time to time as I see or hear about them. If interested, please search for this group and request to join.

I very much appreciate the work of the YAAY Committee, and am happy to be able to support them in the work that they do for our region! For information on what they were up to in 2020, see the YAAY report that has been submitted by the YAAY Convenors, Julia Antonyshyn and Marissa Smirl.
