

MEET YOUR GENERAL COUNCIL 44 COMMISSIONERS



PRAIRIE TO PINE REGIONAL COUNCIL

After the nominations closed, the P2P Nominating Committee met to ensure that list of proposed commissioners meets the requirements set by the General Council and where possible honors the recommend balance and diversity. The Nominating Committee was also guided by a commitment made by The United Church of Canada and affirmed by P2P Executive “to honor and live into intercultural mission and ministry.”

The following slate of commissioners and alternates to General Council 44 was accepted by the Prairie to Pine 2021 Regional Council Meeting on May 28, 2021.



ELIZABETH BROWN

I came to the Conference of Manitoba Northwestern Ontario in 2009 to serve Trinity United, Winnipeg. I have served Winnipeg Presbytery and the Conference (and now the Prairie to Pine Region) in various areas, although primarily in Pastoral Relations. I served the Ministry Employment Policies and Standards (MEPS) at General Council. Through this work, I have had the opportunity to engage in the Church in Mission Unit, and the Church in Partnership work both locally and nationally through its various programs. As a trained facilitator with the Fresh Start program, I have participated with a few new pastoral relationships and training. In my work in the various areas of the church, I have been privileged and blessed to work with many folks who have taught me and continue to teach me how to serve God and the church in faithful ways, reflecting God’s love, compassion and justice in all I do. Thank you for this opportunity to serve you as one of the commissioners.



CHRISTOPHER ST. GEORGE DAVIS

I can emphatically say that my journey to ministry in the United Church of Canada has been truly the work of God.

I was born in Kingston Jamaica and grew up as the adopted only child of an elderly couple who were devout Christians. Their values have anchored me throughout my life. I am truly blessed to have in my life Janice my spouse of sixteen years and

three adorable young children. They are truly the “sunshine of my life” to quote words by the singer Stevie Wonder.

I am keen on issues of justice and equality and have always sought to support however I can persons who have been marginalized and unfairly treated. I am always ready to help those who need as far as I am able, and I am a very compassionate and empathetic person. I look forward to continuing to be God’s instrument of service to others through the United Church of Canada.



KEN DELISLE

I was commissioned in 2004 as a Diaconal Minister and served in 3 Conferences, 6 Presbyteries, 9 Pastoral Charges, Rainbow Ministry, University Chaplain and minister with Winnipeg Church of The Deaf.

I was President of Manitoba and North Western Ontario, served on General Council Executive and on several Presbytery, Conference and National Committees. I am also A Companion of the Centre for Centre for Christian Studies.

Currently, I am Co-Chair of the Equity and Diversity Committee. I have been the Affirm Spokesperson for 2 General Councils and Commissioner for 6 others. In my personal life, I was married to Rev. John Robertson, for 41 years and raised 8 foster children. I am also a professional actor, director, writer and a member of Rainbow Harmony Project. I graduated from the University of Western Ontario with a Master’s in Political Science and received a Master’s In Theology Studies from St. Stephen’s College.



DIANE DWARKA

Diane Dwarka, a retired librarian is a passionate community volunteer whose activities cover community, educational, social, legal, human rights, ecumenical and interfaith issues. She has served on local, provincial, and national organizations and has been president of many organizations including the Council of Caribbean Organizations of Manitoba, Community Legal Education Association, Canadian Council for Multicultural and Intercultural Education, and the Women’s Inter- Church Council of Canada. Diane has served at all levels of the United Church of Canada. For her unstinting efforts, she has received many awards including an eagle feather, a Public Legal Education Award, the YM-YWCA Women of Distinction Award, the Red River

Distinguished Alumnus Award, the Premier's Award for Volunteerism, the B'nai Brith Human Rights Award, a Canadian Race Relations Community Champion Award, and Manitoba 150 award.



LESLEY HARRISON

I am a person of faith, who tries to live the inclusive, radically welcoming, transformative and hope-filled practices that shape this, my faith, which, at its very heart, is about healing and new life.

I am currently in a team ministry at Knox UC, an intercultural, affirming, Community Hub, filled with life and love for our partners and those we serve alongside.

Prior to my return to pastoral ministry, I served as Program Staff with EDGE: A Network for Ministry Development of the General Council Office, where I coordinated a network of consultants and coaches for new ministry development and ministry renewal. This work grew out of The Emerging Spirit Program; a program designed to work with grassroots welcoming ministries. Prior to this, I served as Presbytery Minister for Winnipeg Presbytery exploring with congregations their ministry in a changing context. I also served in Saskatchewan and as overseas personnel with the Moravian Church in Nicaragua. I live with my partner and children in Winnipeg, Manitoba and I am excited to be called to serve as a GC 44 Commissioner.



DONNA KENNEDY

Greetings, my friends! My name is Donna L Kennedy. My native name was given to me by my Sioux elders which translates to Good Feather. I am originally from a northern remote reserve called Garden Hill. My native language is Oji Cree. My parents had seven children. I am the middle child. My parents, two brothers and two sisters have gone on to the next life.

I am a residential school survivor. I went to Teulon Residential School for my senior years from Grade 9 to 12. I have seven children, 22 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren. I have lived in the city of Winnipeg for over 24 years.

Currently, I am retired from work and still quite busy with my volunteer work especially with the United Church. I have been involved with the church for approximately 19 years. I have served committee positions

with Raymond Flett Memorial United Church, Northend Ministry Group and All Native Circle Conference. I was also involved with Feast for Friends. Nationally, I served on the executive council of the United Church, nomination committee and Right Relations committee. Currently I am a member of Broadview. I am also in the National Elders council with the National Indigenous Council.

I have been involved with so many groups that I may have forgotten to mention.

I am honored to put my name forward as consideration as aboriginal person for commissioner to the GC44. I did serve as commissioner before with the All Native Circle conference.



HOPE MATTUS

A retired nurse and health care consultant with the Province of Manitoba. My areas of interest would be worship leadership, policy and planning, and strategic vision. Open to challenges, conversations, and exchange of ideas from group players, fostering team work.

I am a lover of nature and draw inspiration from the earth and being outdoors.

Lover of golf. Currently a member of The United Church in Meadowood. I served on various committees in United Church gaining experience and making contributions on committees such as: Finance, Outreach, Worship, and United Church Women. I served on the Education & Student committee of the Winnipeg Presbytery. Currently am on the Lay Ministry/Lay Support committee, and Equity & Diversity committee of the Prairie to Pine Regional Council.



CYNDI PRICE

Treaty 2 Territory is the area on which I live and what the settlers called Brandon, Manitoba. I am a lay representative. My spouse and I have 2 adult children. It is my honour to be nominated to attend GC 44. I will work to hold up the rural voice at the national level and to communicate the policies and beliefs of the UCC back to our area. I have attended 3 GC gatherings. Each has been a learning curve. As a church, I believe that we must do what we are called to do... "love one another".

We must love unconditionally ALL the time. Love is what we need to give to our relatives, all humans.



HEATHER SANDILANDS

Heather (she/her) has a passion for keeping voices of marginalized communities heard as we “build the land that God has planned where love shines through”. Having lived and worked in multiple provinces, among marginalized communities, predominantly in rural areas, and queer-identifying she has a strong appreciation for the value of diversity. Her experience and faith is that our United Church functions best when we are an open, inclusive, and evolving community, intentional in its commitment to listen to and heed voices often unheard. With a commitment to acknowledging both her places of privilege and oppression, she brings training as a diaconal minister, facilitator, negotiator, and consensus-builder to make and hold space for multiple points of view as we work towards solutions in which everyone feels respected, heard, and understood.



ANNA STEWART

Thank you for the opportunity to put my name forward as a commissioner for the 44th General Council. I have had the privilege of attending several General Council gatherings the most recent being in Oshawa, Ontario 2018. I also served on the General Council Executive as the lay representative for the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario and during that time I served on the General Secretary 's (Nora Sanders) supervision committee, the nominations committee and the sub executive.

I have been active in all the church courts including MNWO president. I am also a LLWL and served on the board of Calling Lakes Centre including the last board which was faced with the daunting task of closing the doors at the Centre. My own spirituality and my love for the United Church has grown with every one of these experiences and I am grateful for all the wonderful people I have met on my journey.

There are many challenges facing the United Church at this time. Some of us are still grieving the loss of our Presbyteries which in the part of the Region I come from, meant weekend gatherings twice a year because of the large geographic area we covered from Snow Lake to Roblin. Many churches struggle to find ministry personnel and many church doors are closing. I believe one of our greatest challenges is learning to “do” church in different ways. I am hopeful that GC 44 will help us to meet these challenges.

While GC 44 will be held remotely, and we will miss the wonderful fellowship shared at other gatherings, it does mean that for some people who find traveling a challenge that they will be able to participate from the comfort of their own home. I recognize the importance of bringing “new” voices to the table, however I have been encouraged by others that “experienced” voices still have a contribution to make.



KAREN TJADEN

I grew up in rural Manitoba, shaped by the faithful people of Sperling United Church. I was commissioned as a Diaconal Minister in 1994 by the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, and have served in inner city and rural community ministry contexts in southern Manitoba. The international ecumenical diaconal community encourages me embrace the work of transformational and social justice ministry that we are all called to as followers of Jesus. Climate justice, economic justice and reconciliation are deep faith and social concerns that require our concerted effort as people of faith and with all people of good will. My spirit is refreshed by outdoor activities in every season and I love learning with others about our amazing world!



ERICA WIEBE Erica Wiebe has been involved in church committees for 10+ years. Some of her involvement has included: helping plan worship with her local session committee, holding various positions on the YAAY Committee, and being a member of the Regional Executive. Prior to her official involvement with committees Erica volunteered in her Community of Faith (St. Paul's, Graysville) by playing the piano for Sunday services. When not engaged in church activities

Erica is employed at St. Amant as a music therapist. As a GC Commissioner Erica looks forward to representing the Communities of Faith in the Prairie to Pine region at gatherings of the greater church.



TAEIL YANG

Unity in Diversity! This is a festival of innumerable colors seen through a prism. The beautiful rainbow colors are wonderful and remind me of a great value I want to pertain to. I want to act as a prism in my life and in my ministry, and after completing a Korean United church's ministry, I have since been able to play the role of a prism in Teulon Balmoral Pastoral Charge.

I have a life companion, two daughters, and two dogs. I grew up in and around Seoul, South Korea, but I have lived in Canada for a great third of my life. I still miss my home country at times, but I have a stronger excitement to meet new people and try unfamiliar things. I appreciate and value my faithful life journey as I exist on the borderline of being a Korean – Canadian.

ALTERNATES



ILA SWAIN

My name is Ila Swain. I am a lifetime member of the United Church. Since retiring as a registered nurse, I trained to be a Licensed Lay Worship Leader and love doing services for my home church of Roland United and other rural churches in this area. I attended GC43 as a commissioner and the experience was extravagant! I'm a wife, Mom of twin sons, grandma of 8 and great grandma of 2.

I live on our farm with my husband. Being involved in the larger church is an enriching experience. I appreciate the ability to share this experience with the vast variety of people involved. The life, business and goals of the National Church are each of our life, business and goals and are therefore important for we the communities of faith to embrace. Thank you for this opportunity.



LINDA BUCHANAN

Tansi. I was so pleased to be able to put my name forward for GC44. This would be my third General Council and I am in awe of how much work goes into doing our best to ensure God's place is known in our country through the work of this church. I am so glad we are working on a multicultural face in Canada – and that we can make these changes through positive examples. The experience at the end of GC43 will stand out in my mind forever – listening to the voices that we often overlook when we think we have the answers. As a white person who worked with the indigenous communities in northern Manitoba for years, I was awed by the openness to spiritual issues – still having prayer to open meetings (prayer was banned in our school and meetings), proudly claiming themselves as a recovering addict (our recovery has to be anonymous). OCN hoists a LGBTQ2 flag on the reserve for the

whole month. I am a hard worker but I also am soaking in all the new ideas and thoughts to make a new tomorrow in the church I love. Ekosi



BETTY KELLY

I have been active volunteer in all courts of the United Church of Canada for almost 30 years, including the Lay Rep to General Council Executive for the Conf. of MNWO (2006 – 2012). Attendance at 5 General Councils to date, a term as Conference President, and now as a member of the P2P Nominating Committee has deepened my appreciation of the rich diversity of the church community as well as the complexity of the United Church organizational structures. I also have extensive experience consulting with non-profit organizations regarding governance, strategic planning, and community development. The shared learning and discernment that happens during the General Council meeting is an important aspect of how the United Church of Canada develops policy that truly reflects the thinking of the gathered community. If I were called to be a commissioner for GC 44, I would be honored to do so.



TESSA BLAIKIE WHITECLOUD

Tessa Blaikie Whitecloud is the Executive Director of 1JustCity, a charity in Winnipeg started by the Winnipeg Presbytery of the United Church of Canada as a secular non-profit organization that operates on the values of love, reconciliation, growing community capacity and dignity/inclusion for all.

During the cold months, they run Winnipeg's only no Barrier overnight pop-up warming centre in the Augustine United Church. All year they have three drop-in community centres in Winnipeg's core neighbourhoods. Tessa grew up at Transcona Memorial United Church and believes the church needs to be a louder voice for the justice Jesus modeled. She is excited to attend her second GC if needed as an alternate.