

REPORT of THE MODERATOR and GENERAL SECRETARY



The Right Reverend Dr. Richard Bott
Moderator, The United Church of Canada

Transcript from the Moderator's 2022 Welcome Video to Regional Council

Hello to all of you gathered for this meeting of the Regional Council. Grace and peace and hope and love to you, from me, and from the rest of The United Church of Canada – in Jesus' name!

So much is going on, isn't it?

As the church, as the wider community of Canada, and as people of the world, we continue to try and understand what changes have been wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, by economic hardships, by changing social and political structures, by war, by climate disaster, and by... more. It's not an easy world to understand – and it's not always easy to articulate, or live out, our responses to everything that is happening.

And yet, as communities of faith made up of amazing individuals of every age and stage and place of life, you're doing that work. As people of deep spirituality, bold discipleship, and daring justice, you are connecting with God, with your neighbour, with your world – and working in hope for the healing of creation.

With everything that has happened, everything that is happening now, and the future that is coming, you are helping the church to truly be the body of Christ – in whatever shape and configuration it's going to take in this day and this age.

As this is my last opportunity to bring greetings to your Regional Council as your Moderator, I'd like to close by saying this – thank you, so very much, for being who you are.

Christ's peace IS with you, Beloved Community. Now. Always.

Alleluia!

Alleluia, amen.

Salutations à vous toutes et tous qui êtes réunis à cette assemblée du conseil régional. De ma part et de la part de toute l'Église Unie du Canada, puissent la grâce et la paix, l'espérance et l'amour être avec vous au nom de Jésus!

Il y a tant de choses qui surviennent n'est-ce pas?

En tant qu'Église, en tant que membres de l'ensemble de la communauté canadienne, en tant que citoyennes et citoyens du monde, nous nous efforçons de prendre toute la mesure des changements profonds qu'ont générés la pandémie de COVID-19, les difficultés économiques, les transformations des structures sociales et politiques, la guerre, le désastre climatique, toutes choses associées à bien d'autres facteurs. Le monde actuel est difficile à comprendre et il n'est souvent pas aisé de répondre de façon pertinente et engagée à tout ce qui se passe.

Et pourtant, en tant que communautés de foi constituées de personnes remarquables, de tous âges, étapes et milieux de vie, vous accomplissez cette tâche. En tant que gens animés par une spiritualité profonde, dans une vie de disciple dynamique et pour une quête audacieuse de justice, vous êtes intimement reliés à Dieu, à votre prochain, à notre monde, en œuvrant avec espérance pour la guérison de la création.

Dans tout ce qui s'est passé dernièrement, dans tout ce qui survient actuellement, et dans tout ce qui advient, vous contribuez à faire de l'Église le véritable corps du Christ, quelles que soient la forme ou la configuration qu'elle prendra en cette heure et en cette époque.

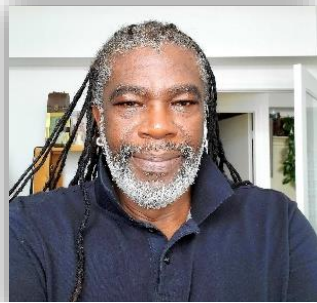
Alors que c'est la dernière fois que j'adresse mes salutations à votre conseil régional à titre de modérateur, je souhaite conclure ainsi : merci, merci infiniment d'être les personnes que vous êtes.

La paix du Christ EST avec vous, communauté bien-aimée. Maintenant, et pour toujours.

Alléluia!

Alléluia, amen.

Richard Bott,
43rd Moderator of The United Church of Canada



Rev. Michael Blair
General Secretary, The United Church of Canada

Members of the regional council:

Called by God, as disciples of Jesus, The United Church of Canada seeks to be a bold, connected, evolving church of diverse, courageous, hope-filled communities united in deep spirituality, inspiring worship and daring justice.

Let me add my greetings to that of the Moderator, along with of those of my staff colleagues in the General Council Office. We are grateful for the opportunity and privilege to be co-partners with you in the work and ministry of this church of ours, and we continue to nudge each other in our desire to live authentically as the beloved community of Jesus.

Here are a few highlights from our ministry since my last report.

Governance

The General Council Executive has had the opportunity to serve four years in the role due to the postponement of the 44th General Council. This past quadrennium has allowed the Executive to deepen its understanding of its role in the new structure of the church. It has certainly been a learning process. Over the course of its mandate the Executive has met over 21 times, not including monthly learning and discussion sessions. Some of the work before the Executive has been challenging and has resulted in some difficult decision making.

As the Executive continues to live with integrity into the Caretakers' [Calls to the Church](#), it has prioritized its work of developing and deepening its relationship with the Indigenous Church. One tangible way it has been seeking to embody the call is to invite the National Indigenous Elders Council to accompany the work of the Executive. At each meeting of the Executive, an Elder is present to walk with the Executive. In the ongoing work of healing, the Executive approved \$3 million as a starting point to support communities impacted by the legacies of residential schools in [Bringing the Children Home](#). The Moderator and I have been meeting with Chiefs and Councils of the various communities to walk in a good way.

In September 2021, the Executive affirmed the new **Call and Vision for the Church**—Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, Daring Justice—and forwarded it to the Annual Meeting of the 43rd General Council for approval. We are engaging in a process of animating the Call and Vision across the church. A team of staff and elected members is working on this process. Resources for the [Call and Vision](#) can be found online.

As the church continues to live into its commitment to being an antiracist denomination, the Executive approved the [Antiracism Action Plan](#) in November 2021.

The Executive and General Secretary have forwarded a number of proposals to the 44th General Council aimed at strengthening our collective ministry, including **GCE06** Ministry Leadership to meet the needs of the church in the 2020s; **GCE04** Just Peace in Palestine and Israel, asking that we approach this from a lens of principles rather than policy; **GCE07** the implementation of a Captive Insurance Program with a move to set up an insurance company to help communities of faith deal with rising insurance costs; and **GS08** Climate Justice, seeking to booster the work of the [Faithful Footprints](#) program and renew the church's commitment to the reduction of emissions by 80 percent by 2030.

Management

Transition continues to be a reality for the work of the General Council Office. Three key areas of transition are staffing, strategic planning, and the future of work.

Staffing

This past year a number of staffs have retired, including the *Rev. Dr. John Young*, Executive Minister for Theological Leadership; *Ms. Catherine Rodd*, Executive Officer Communications; and the *Rev. Dr. Jenny Stephens*, Coordinator – Office of Vocation. We also said goodbye to *Ms. Sue Fortner*, Executive Assistant to the Moderator and General Secretary. *Ms. Cynthia Gunn*, who has served as Legal Counsel for over 26 years, will also be retiring this summer. We have been grateful for the gifts of the staff that have joined the team. As the church seeks to take seriously its commitment to becoming an antiracist church rooted in equity, and with the learnings from the pandemic, we have been able to recruit a fairly diverse group of staff. We welcomed the *Rev. Dr. Japhet Ndhlovu* as the Executive Minister – Church in Mission; *Ms. Sarah Charters* to the role of President of The United Church of Canada Foundation and Executive Officer – Philanthropy; the *Rev. Dr. Jennifer Janzen-Ball* to the role of Executive Minister – Theological Leadership; *Ms. Nicole Treksler* as Legal Counsel; *Ms. Marlene Britton* as Team Lead, Policy and Programs for Ministry Personnel (Office of Vocation); *Ms. Jennifer Henry* as Senior Program Development and Strategy Lead; and *Ms. Carol Owegi* as Bilingual Executive Assistant to the Moderator and General Secretary. We are grateful to the gifts these folks bring to the team.

Strategic Plan

We are working on the implementation of the strategic plan and its five objectives: Nurture the Common Good, Strengthen Invitation, Invigorate Leadership, Embolden Justice, and Deepen Integrity.

A transition team has been working diligently to create the operational plan that will further the five strategic objectives. Staff teams in each objective area are developing multi-year initiatives for all three years of the plan (2022–2025) as well as developing plans (activities, resources, objectives, and key results) for year one. The third stream includes reviewing existing work and functions, including an external audit of communications and of EDGE, and an internal process being undertaken by the senior managers. While this transition to centralized and aligned planning is challenging and we pursue opportunities in culture change, we are on track and making good progress.

Future of Work

Beginning September 1, 2022, the General Council Office will be operating as a fully hybrid workspace. Staff roles are classified as either *Essential, Flexible, Remote, or Deployed*. Historically, going to the office to work was the primary way of understanding the workplace. We are proposing to change the office paradigm from “workspace” to “collaboration and meeting space.” We need to shift our thinking from a set number of hours in the office to planned events and connecting opportunities. This will be an intentional time for the office as it seeks to imagine new ways of working collaboratively in a more disperse environment. Management is committed to learning from this way of working as we look to designing and planning for the new offices to be located at 300 Bloor Street (in partnership with Bloor Street United Church), which will be open at the end of 2025.

Thank you for all you do and your place in the Beloved Community.

So, be bold, Beloved.

Be brave, Beloved.

Be blessed, Beloved.

REPORT – REGION COUNCIL EXECUTIVE CO-CHAIRS



Diane Dwarka
Chair



Patricia Bird
Chair

During this past year, the work of the Prairie to Pine Regional Council has continued to grow as we learn more about how to connect and work with each other. COVID has required us to become more and more proficient in online technology, but we have also worked hard to create and encourage lines of communication between the Communities of Faith and the Regional Council and between Communities of Faith themselves. It has not been an easy year as most of us had to continue with electronic interactions. Many communities and individuals cannot participate fully due to lack of electronic devices, poor internet connection and a need for help in navigating the increasing online requirements.

The Regional Council Executive met monthly throughout this year. We are looking forward to our Annual Meeting and the chance to come together again to talk, celebrate and remember who we have been as part of this United Church faith community.

Some of the highlights for us this year have been:

Celebrations

Attending the **Ordination Service for Eleanor Thompson** in Bunibonibee First Nation (Oxford House); the **Commissioning of Sam Ross** at Pimicikamak First Nation (Cross Lake) this fall. Both services were under the authority of the National Indigenous Council (NIC) and represent the first services led by NIC in Canada.

Officiating at a service celebrating the **Admission to the Order of Ministry** of the United Church of Canada of **Rev. Christopher St. George** at Victoria United Church, Melita.

Officiating at a service celebrating the **Ordination to the Order of Ministry** of the United Church of Canada **Susan Irene McIlveen** at Churchill Park United, Winnipeg. In gratitude we celebrate Life, Blessings, and Ministry.

We Are All Treaty People Celebration 2021: We attended a ceremony at the Kapabamayak Achaak Healing Forest, St. John's Park, Winnipeg which included a Welcoming Ceremony, a Pipe and Water Ceremony. Elder Teachings from The Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, a feast, a giveaway' and a Closing Ceremony.

As your co-chairs, it was an honour to represent our Regional Council at these events.

Structure Document: we have been part of a task group working on updating and completing our Regional Council's Structure Document. This document will provide a standardized format of Purpose, Responsibility, Meeting requirements and Accountability as well as skill and time commitments needed for all positions and committees of the Regional Council.

It will be a helpful document for those seeking or holding a volunteer position.

Land Acknowledgement: Thanks to those who worked on producing a new Land Acknowledgement which is currently being used at our meetings and on our website. We recognize that Land Acknowledgements are not intended to be a static statement and we will continue to challenge and change our words and actions as we continue toward reconciliation and justice.

Truth and Reconciliation: A small group is exploring our role in carrying forward the work of Truth and Reconciliation. We are aware this will be a long, ongoing commitment for continued education, understanding and actions required as we seek the way to reparations and resurgence of important rights and relationships. We need to keep reminding ourselves of the need to unite as human beings.

Working towards becoming an **Anti Racist** and an **Intercultural** Church This is ongoing work which each of us must engage in for this goal to become a reality.

General Council 44: [Who Do You Say I am?](#) is the theme for this General Council, the longest in the history of the UCC. The meeting was constituted on February 13, 2022 and will culminate with the Closing Worship and Installation of the new Moderator on August 07, 2022. There are 14 commissioners and four alternates from this region who are participating in learning sessions and decision-making sessions.

The Committees and Commissions Work: We thank the Pastoral Relations Commission, the Committee on Ministry Personnel Support, the Committee on Community of Faith Support and the Committee on Lay Support, the Property Commission, the Equity and Diversity Committee, and the Nominating Committee for their tireless work.

Staff: a huge “thank you” to Shannon McCarthy, Judy Hare, Julie Graham, Twila MacNair, Jamie McKay, Cherry Abad, and Heather Dootoff for their ongoing work.

It feels like this year has gone by much too quickly. possibly, not fast enough for others. This time of reflection is so important in allowing us to take stock of what we have done, what we have lost or gained and what is still to be done.

We have enjoyed our time as co-chairs and have each benefited from a supportive, collegial partnership with great communication and a common goal for the well being of this Regional Council.

In closing, we are all fellow travellers on a road to self discovery and understanding. We need each other to walk beside and help carry loads that are too much for individuals. Only through love and understanding can we be the joyful noise that this world needs.

Diane Dwarka and Patricia Bird

Co-chairs

Prairie to Pine Regional Council Executive

REPORT of the OFFICE OF VOCATION MINISTER



Karen Medland
Office of Vocation Minister
Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and
Prairie to Pine Regions

Hi my name is Karen Medland and I am the Minister for the Office of Vocation working in Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and Prairie to Pine Regions. Well, another year has passed in our ministry together during these strange times.

As your Office of Vocation Minister, I feel blessed to serve with you all in this work, trying to support you in any way I can. We continue to see people responding to the call from God to ministry which keeps the candidacy board busy.

We have at present 38 candidates and inquirers within the three regions that I support. Out of that number we expect to see 8 be commissioned, ordained, or recognised sometime this year, which gives me great hope for the church as we look to the future. If you or someone you know is interested in serving in paid accountable ministry please contact the Office of Vocation where you will be directed to an Office of Vocation Minister for assistance.

Some of you may already be aware that I am moving on from this role and joining Chinook Winds Region as the Pastoral Relations Minister. It has been a great honour to serve you all over the last three years and I pray that your ministries continue to show the love of God in the world to all who encounter them.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr Karen Medland

Office of Vocation Minister for Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and Prairie to Pine Regions

kmedland@united-church.ca

