

## Virtual Town Hall Summary

On Tuesday June 25 approximately 40 individuals from the Prairie to Pine region including staff, ministers (both active and retired), and lay people gathered to discuss our current methods of gathering. After information and context were provided by Shannon McCarthy and Erica Wittevrongel breakout rooms allowed attendees to engage in deeper discussion. Those in the breakout rooms were asked to consider which needs for connection were currently being met, and which areas are lacking. Towards the end of the event the participants gathered together in one group and were asked to share a rose and a thorn from their breakout room discussion.

Some of the roses (positive aspects) of the conversations included:

- There are lots of ways to connect
- The youth continue to gather regularly
- Current social justice initiatives and involvement
- The Weekly News is a wonderful source of information for upcoming events

Some of the thorns (challenging elements) of the conversations included:

- People are tired, creating a sense of hesitance to commit to planning or attending events
- When the needs of one's community of faith are high it is difficult to find the time and resources to initiate connection with other communities of faith
- Zoom can create connection but is dependent on connectivity, technological skill, and doesn't provide the same sense of fellowship as an in-person gathering

Throughout the meeting we heard that people are wanting to gather, but that there are barriers that often prevent participation. We also heard that opportunities to gather, like the virtual town hall, enabled people to share their concerns, which were often similar to those in other communities of faith, creating a shared sense of purpose and belonging.

I would like to thank all of those who assisted in the planning and preparation for this event. The work that you put into this event fostered opportunities for those in Prairie to Pine to share their concerns and express their longing for continued opportunities to connect. I would also like to thank all those who attended the Virtual Town Hall. Your voices are important, and your concerns and ideas are a valuable part of what future fellowship opportunities will include.

This was just the first step living into this new form of Church. Please watch the Weekly News for further updates as the date for the next Virtual Town Hall is currently TBD.

*Erica Wittevrongel*

Past Co-Chair

Prairie to Pine Regional Council