

Equity and Diversity Committee Annual Report (January 2023 – June 2024)

Introduction

The Equity and Diversity (E&D) Committee experienced a significant transition during this period as we shifted our focus from Affirming Ministries to a broader scope encompassing Equity and Diversity. This report covers our journey from January 2023 to June 2024, outlining our key changes, challenges, and accomplishments.

2023 Overview

Committee Transitions

The year 2023 was marked by a significant shift in the makeup of the E&D Committee. Many long-serving members stepped down, including Jamie Miller, Hope Mattus, Cathey Day, Kyle Kellar, and M. Chorney. In their place, we welcomed new members: Kristin Woodburke, Susan Weppeler, Carrie Martens, Tanis Podobni, and Rob Reed. Only two members from the previous committee, Alan Gershuny and Linda Rodgers, continued; as well, Julie Graham, the Tri-Regional Minister for Justice and Communication, continued as staff support. This change signified a shift not only in members but also in our focus and goals.

Events and Initiatives

- United Against Hate Webinar: Several E&D members participated in a webinar hosted by United in Learning titled *United Against Hate*, aligning with our committee's focus on combating hate and discrimination.
- P2P Regional Council Meeting (Meadowood United Church):
 - The E&D Committee hosted an informational table featuring LGBTQIA+ resources and giveaways.
 - We organised a panel discussion on *The Common Good*, featuring the following speakers:
 - Ken DeLisle: Affirming Ministries
 - Julie Graham: Anti-Hate Initiatives
 - Alcris Limongi: Racial Justice
 - Despite efforts, we were unable to secure an Indigenous speaker, highlighting an area for improvement in achieving inclusivity.
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2024 Overview

Committee Development

At the close of 2023 and early in 2024, we spent time getting to know each other. We continued to face challenges in creating a more diverse membership. Kristin Woodburke was appointed as the new chairperson. We reviewed our committee's job description and goals. In March 2024, we updated our committee's purpose:

"The Committee will assess, educate, and raise awareness to celebrate the diversity and intercultural membership of our Region; and will help the Regional Council be accountable for living out its Affirming commitments and membership."

2024 Events and Programs

- **Equity and Diversity Community Connections (EDCC):**

We launched an ongoing series of Zoom meetings to encourage communication and collaboration among churches and interested parties on equity and diversity issues. Key meetings included:

- **PIE Day Prep Meeting** (Jan 31, 2024): 25 participants from the Prairie to Pine (P2P) region attended this Zoom session in preparation for PIE Day events.
- **P2P Equity and Diversity Meeting** (March 14, 2024, PIE Day): Held at the Fairmont Hotel in Winnipeg, this meeting gathered E&D members alongside ten guests, including clergy, lay people, and two members of Pembina Valley Pride. Discussions covered representation at Regional Council Executive meetings, participating in Winnipeg Pride Day, setting up a closed Facebook group, and editing the committee's job description.
- **Pride Prep Meeting** (April 24, 2024): Another EDCC Zoom session focused on planning for Pride events and fostering continued community connections.

New Communication Channels

On April 25, 2024, we launched a private Facebook group, *Prairie to Pine Affirming Ministries and People*. This has become an effective platform for information sharing, including:

- Updates from the MB Pride Alliance
- Resources for crisis response and safety concerns
- Publicising Pride event dates and sharing photos
- Requests from *Women and Gender Equality* to connect with rural 2S and LGBTQIA+ individuals

Ongoing Adjustments and Future Priorities

As we continue to adjust to our updated mandate, our committee remains committed to achieving greater diversity within our ranks and ensuring that our efforts reflect the evolving needs of the Prairie to Pine region. We look forward to continuing our work in the upcoming year, building on the foundation we've established while addressing the challenges we face.

Conclusion

The Equity and Diversity Committee has made significant progress in transitioning its focus, strengthening its team, and implementing new initiatives. We remain dedicated to fostering a culture of inclusivity, equity, and justice across the United Church's Regional Council. We express our gratitude to all members, both past and present, for their contributions to this important work.

Submitted by
The Equity and Diversity Committee
Prairie to Pine Regional Council