

## **Prairie to Pine Regional Council**

The Regional Executive continued to meet on a monthly basis. Our meeting began with a short check-in or worship facilitated by a member of the Executive. I appreciated the opportunity to hear the variety of interpretations that these times of togetherness included. Although prayer was often included, facilitators also shared thoughts and questions that encouraged the Executive to interact with the Creator in unique methods and mediums outside of Sunday worship.

In 2023 and 2024, I was fortunate enough to attend the convocation for St. Andrews College and its affiliate institutions in Saskatoon. Representing Prairie to Pine at that event was such a privilege. Witnessing the graduation of students from several different denominations filled me with hope for the future of the church. I was also aware of the positive presence that we can hold in a world that is too often enveloped in divisiveness and pain. One of my favorite aspects of the event was the honorary degrees bestowed upon those who have supported the church and its members in significant ways throughout their faith journeys. Hearing the stories of those individuals and the events that shaped their ministry, whether ordered or lay, provided another element to the overall inspiration and hope that graduation services often hold.

One of the proposals to come out of the previous Regional meeting concerned the method and frequency with which we meet. This also brought forth concerns related to a loss of connection. To address those concerns, the Executive with the assistance of Regional staff, planned a virtual town hall during which members of Prairie to Pine could share areas of hope, and areas of concern, and begin to construct feasible steps through which connection could be maintained while recognizing that the type of connection may look new or different compared to the past. Creating this opportunity to share enabled participants to find similarities in their experiences of frustration and grief regarding the loss of the ways in which the church used to function. It allowed people to share elements of their ministries that were working well, and upcoming aspects of their work that were exciting and life-giving. Out of that event we heard that participants would be open to attending similar opportunities. This may be something that occurs this fall/winter as we continue to practice connecting in different ways, making use of the methods of connection already in place, and addressing the needs of those within our region.

On June 23, 2024, I joined the staff of Prairie to Pine Regional Council in officiating the service celebrating the commissioning of Maureen McCartney and the ordination of Ilene Dowd. The service took place at First United Church in Dauphin, MB. The congregation of First United went above and beyond to ensure that the space, technology, and food needs were successfully met resulting in a service that was meaningful to all in attendance.

During this period, Patricia Bird completed her term as co-chair. She did incredible work with the Executive and provided a calm, approachable space in which we could plan and meet.

Her determination to complete the structure document is a testament to her spirit and willingness to share her gifts with the Region. It was a pleasure to work with Patricia as she provided a model of chairing that I could live into as I finished my term as solo-chair.

My move to Saskatchewan in October 2022 meant that I wasn't able to attend important events in Manitoba. I would like to thank the Prairie to Pine staff and all those who offered their time and talents attending events and ensuring appropriate representation of the Prairie to Pine Region. I would also like to thank all of the members of the Regional Executive and corresponding members for their work over this past year. Although I am moving on from the Regional Executive, I know that the Region is in good hands with the new and current members who will represent those who call Prairie to Pine home.

Respectfully submitted,

Erica Wittevrongel  
Past Chair Prairie to Pine Regional Council