

**2023-2024 REPORT OF THE PASTORAL RELATIONS MINISTER
TO PRAIRIE TO PINE REGIONAL COUNCIL**

We have this ministry and **we are not discouraged**,
it is by God's own power that we may live and serve.
Openly we share God's word, speaking truth as we believe,
Praying that the shadowed world may healing light receive.
We have this ministry, O God, receive our living.

(Words and music by Jim Strathdee, 1979 # 510 in Voices United, One License #A-609122)

This hymn might seem appropriate (or not) to depict this past year in Prairie to Pine Regional Council depending on whether you have a glass-half-full or a glass-half-empty outlook on what has been happening. This pastoral year 2023-2024 has been a year of engaging in the newly emerging reality of post-pandemic times; a year of engaging the current demographics within the United Church of Canada within Prairie to Pine Regional Council and our community contexts that are impacting the availability of volunteers for leadership positions within local Communities of Faith and the Regional Council; a year of openness to new ways of being church and sharing resources of paid accountable ministry and buildings; a new way of engaging education and networking online that is more friendly to the environment; a year of engaging in ministry with an increasing number of Ministers from other denominations be they our ecumenical partners here in Canada or partners around the globe and experiencing” the new lenses” “these new relationships bring; a year with a lot of talking, a lot of meetings, a lot of celebrating of new beginnings and yes, some endings. You can read details in each of the reports from committees and commissions with which I have the pleasure to work: the Committee on Community of Faith Support; the Committee on Lay Ministry/Lay Leadership Support; the Committee on Ministry Personnel Support and the Pastoral Relations Commission.

Below are a few comments by way of an overview or trends noted in working with these committees, commissions, lay leadership and Ministry Personnel and the communities of faith and my colleagues across the country:

POLICIES & RESOURCES

It was a year when we:

- fine-tuned some policies to better meet expressed needs (*Licensed Lay Worship Leader Pulpit Supply*);
- adopted some new policies: *Policy on Lay Led Communities of Faith with Congregational Designated Ministers* in response to changes made at GC 44 and in anticipation of requests); and a *Policy for Admission, Commissioning, Ordination, or Recognition* mainly

in response to the General Council 44 decisions regarding the future of Designated Lay Ministry and in anticipation of the request for ordination and/or commissioning of some of the Ministry Personnel with DLM training;

- and began working on revisions to policies and protocols to hopefully assist with some of the challenges in our current context such as Pastoral Charge Supervision.
- began to make some revisions to resources used in the pastoral relations processes and work facilitated by the Committee on Community of Faith Support related to future options and changes, to in hopes of making them clearer and more user-friendly. These are still a work in progress.

TRANSITIONS

As you can read in the Pastoral Relations Update it was a year when we had four ministry personnel begin to collect their United Church Pension: Elizabeth Brown, Kathy Platt, Laurie Stewart, and Deborah Vitt. We had one Designated Lay Minister ordained and one Designated Lay Minister commissioned to Diaconal Ministry on June 23, 2024. Twenty-seven Pastoral Charges experienced **changes in their pastoral relations** between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, resulting in nine **Covenanting Services** in the period; changes that were approved during that period may result in new pastoral relationships in 2024-2025 Pastoral Year: 16 Communities of Faith entered new collaborative ministry agreements between United Churches, one new Ecumenical Shared Ministry Agreement involving an Anglican Parish (Souris), one new Ministry Sharing Agreement with and Anglican parish (Miniota). Among those remembered in the In Memoria are eleven Ministry Personnel and eleven lay volunteers.

OPENNESS TO OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

When Communities of Faith and Pastoral Charges want to look at their future and explore some of the options, we would appreciate the opportunity to engage with you. We have become aware that some pastoral charges with financial resources have engaged individuals or companies with particular specialties to facilitate visioning, strategic planning or building-related partnering. We would encourage you to consider resources that may be available within church circles to assist with some of those matters accessible through our Growth Animator, Jordan Cantwell (see her report for details) and/or Miriam Bowlby of the United Property Resource Corporation. As the hymn says “Let the dreams we dream be larger than they’ve ever been before.” The Committee on Community of Faith Support, the Pastoral Relations Commission, and the Property Commission would like to ensure that you don’t limit yourselves to only options that you may be familiar with from the past. New ways of being together and doing ministry ARE possible, so reach out and let us help you explore. Who knows, you may brainstorm something new and exciting that is doable within current governance and regulations or with minor tinkering!

VOLUNTEERS

Paving new paths or developing new ways of being and doing often means things need to be tailored to context. That work often requires time and patience and may require focused assistance from staff and trained volunteers. To that end, we are actively seeking people to be trained and mentored to function as Regional Council Liaisons (Pastoral Relations) joining the nine Liaisons that we have functioning at the present time. Larger numbers could allow some

Liaisons to specialize in a particular aspect of the work such as processes related to collaborative ministries. The Committee on Community of Faith Support could benefit from additional people to accomplish the work that they do on behalf of the Regional Council, related to self-assessments and accompanying Communities of Faith through processes related to amalgamations and disbanding. The Committee on Lay Ministry Lay Leadership Support is seeking to add a couple of ordered ministers to their membership, especially to help with interviews and training processes.

TRAININGS & EDUCATION

Our online training for pastoral relations processes (Community of Faith Profile teams and Search Committees) continues to be done on a rotational basis with the schedule based on the needs of those requiring training. The same could be said of training for Sacraments Elders and members of Ministry and Personnel Committees. We are in the process of responding to a request for some support and training for pastoral care visitors through offering training and the development of a network.

CONNECTING & SUPPORTING

The Regional Council has attempted to encourage cluster gatherings and networks of those in geographical areas or with common interests or visions for mutual support and inspiration. Some of these gatherings are happening regularly on ZOOM and/or in person while others are very occasional. The Support Committees try and gather certain populations related to their particular work at least annually in person: active Ministry Personnel; Ministry Personnel collecting UCC pensions; and Licensed Lay Worship Leaders. Because of the growing number of Ministry Personnel coming into the Regional Council from various parts of the globe and from other denominations, we are also attempting to gather those Ministry Personnel to provide mutual support and to share their unique experiences of the immigration and admissions process journeys and perspectives of this United Church of ours.

I am so very grateful for the many people who voluntarily share their skills and time in various committees, commissions, boards, and councils locally, regionally, and nationally. I am grateful for colleagues who bring different skills and perspectives to the work that we share. I am particularly grateful to Cherry Abad, Administrative Support, for the work that she does with me and the various committees.

Respectfully submitted,

Reverend Judith Hare, Pastoral Relations Minister

A few statistics related to the period July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024 (more or less accurate):

- Approximately 42 Pastoral Charges interacted with the Pastoral Relations Commission within the past year (profile and/or search processes; ministry sharing or Collaborative Ministry agreements and/or change in ministry time); some completed; some still in

process. In the fall of 2023, there were nine services celebrating new Pastoral Relations Covenants.

- Eight new Collaborative Ministry **arrangements involving 16 communities of faith were approved in this pastoral year some of which began to function with Ministry Personnel in place on or after July 1, 2024**
- Two Communities of Faith/Pastoral Charges engaged in a Collaborative Ministry Agreement for a decade have made some changes when confronted with a change in pastoral relations from their Minister: one Community of faith is in the process of disbanding (Sparling); the other community of faith moved into a new Collaborative Ministry arrangement with another partner (Rosser Grosse Isle).
- Two Communities of Faith /Pastoral Charges (Grandview and St. Paul's United Church-Gilbert Plains) that had been in a Collaborative Ministry Agreement for some years decided to amalgamate into ONE two-point pastoral charge (Grand Plains) before searching for a new minister after the retirement of their former minister in 2023.
- Two Communities of Faith (Emerson and Dominion City) amalgamated into one amalgamated Community of Faith making what was a three-point Pastoral Charge into a two-point Pastoral Charge (Valley)
- As noted in the Report on Committee on Community of Faith Support there were **six Communities of Faith that were disbanded** this year (Elm Creek; Ashern; Miniota; Winnipeg Korean United; Alexander and Lakeside: Ste Rose (September)
- One new Ecumenical Shared Ministry Agreement was completed this past year between **St. Paul's United Church and St. Luke's Anglican Church in Souris**; one of our longstanding Ecumenical Shared Ministries at **Broadway Disciples United Church, Winnipeg** transitioned to leadership under the oversight of the Christian Church(Disciples of Christ); we had one **ecumenical ministry sharing agreement** approved between **Miniota United Church and Holy Trinity Anglican Church** with Reverend Sally Carter as Minister exploring the possibility of a longer term arrangement; one **ministry sharing agreement** in place between **Altona United Church and Ecumenical Shared Ministry at Morris** to assist with pastoral care and worship leadership needs while they were in search process. **We currently have nine Pastoral Charges within the Prairie to Pine Regional Council designated as Ecumenical Shared Ministries.**
- As of June 30, 2024, there were 142 non-Indigenous Communities of Faith and 18 Indigenous Ministries organized into 140 Pastoral Charges, among them nine Collaborative Ministry arrangements. The number of Collaborative Ministries shifted significantly as of the summer of 2024.
- Seventy-nine Pastoral Charges/Communities of Faith received Pastoral Charge Supervision for some portion of **the 2023-2024 Pastoral Year** with 15 lay people and 41 ministry personnel assuming the role of Pastoral Charge Supervisor with 17 PCs assuming more than 1 supervision assignment (three of those Pastoral Charges had Candidates; two Pastoral Charges had Ministers in Admission Process); 3 of our Ecumenical Shared Ministry sites had Pastoral Charge Supervisors who function as denominational mentors while are Ministry Personnel of another denomination in place; three Pastoral Charge Supervisors were in place for sabbaticals. We are grateful that

Living Skies Regional Council has agreed to allow one of their Ministry Personnel who spends time in Manitoba to act as a Pastoral Charge Supervisor here.

- We had one Ministry Personnel experience Maternity/Parental Leave and four Ministry Personnel experience Medical Absence. We had four Ministry Personnel engage in sabbatical leave within the pastoral year.
- Forty Ministry Personnel engaged in full-time ministry during this pastoral year among those 4 from other denominations serving Ecumenical Shared Ministries; 7 in Collaborative arrangements serving 14 Communities of Faith in FTE positions; 1 in the Admission process;
- Twenty-four Ministry Personnel were in part-time employment including 12 Retired Supply; 5 were in employment more than halftime; 9 were in halftime employment, and 9 were less than halftime; 1 was in collaborative arrangements/more than one pastoral charge; 6 were in Calls and the balance in appointments
- As of June 30, 2024, ten pastoral charges were still engaged in pastoral relations profile or search processes (4 seeking FTE; four seeking to fill 2 FTE positions as Collaborative Ministry, 2 seeking PT ministry, one as an SME (Supervised Education Site); We are anticipating 9 Covenanting Services this fall to acknowledge new pastoral relationships of six months or longer.
- Forty-five Pastoral Charges have been without paid accountable ministry leadership for a year or more and some have not yet /or are not intending to engage the profile /search processes looking for Ministry Personnel Leadership (perpetually vacant of paid accountable leadership).
- Ten self-described “minority “Ministry Personnel serving in non-Indigenous Ministry settings with two more beginning in pastoral relationships over the summer of 2024 and one pastoral charge awaiting the arrival of their Minister from Zimbabwe.
- Prairie to Pine has eighteen Indigenous Ministries served by 12 Indigenous Ministers and supported by Reynold Anderson, the Community Capacity Development Coordinator for Keewatin Circle. This summer Fisher River United Church appointed a new minister.