

Support to Communities of Faith Commission

Bill Steadman, Chairperson

The Commission that offers Support to Local Communities of Faith has met each month over the last 17 months since our June, 2019 meeting of the Canadian Shield Region (except for the summer months). Our work falls under a number of areas of responsibility that are reported on separately in this document. This report is to point you to those other reports and offer an understanding of the general responsibilities of the Commission. Our list of members is offered at the end of this document.



Main Responsibility of Commission

The main purpose of this commission is to offer support to local communities of faith. One of the primary responsibilities in helping congregations and communities of faith in the development of their profile and entering into a covenant with the region. We began a process of testing ways to support congregations and communities of faith in the winter of 2020, but the arrival of the restrictions due to COVID-19 meant that local communities no longer were meeting in person and so the consultation process has been put on pause to be picked up as soon as possible.

Property Resource Team

One of the main support areas is working with congregations around financial issues and property management.

The Property Resource Team, chaired by Gord Roberts, has developed a thorough Policy and Procedures Manual to guide congregations on their property management and approval processes for major capital programs. It is available on the Canadian Shield Web Page. Some highlights of that document:

- 1) Communities of Faith looking at major renovations of \$75,000 or more **should** consult the Property Resource Team for approval and guidance.
- 2) Communities of Faith looking at renovations or capital costs of less than \$75,000 **are encouraged** to consult the Property Resource Team to help with meeting the needs of the community in such a project.
- 3) Congregations seeking amalgamation or closure are asked to develop a clear process in conjunction with the Property Resource Team and approved by the Commission. Details on these processes are in the Policy and Procedures Manual.
- 4) All details around the sale of property for whatever reason also are outlined in the Property Policies and Procedures Manual.

Mission Support & Regional Council Grants Resource Team

The Mission Support and Regional Council Grants Resource Team recommend successful applicants for Mission Funding through Mission and Service. This resource team is chaired by Diane Trollope. It also has dealt with applications from congregations seeking funding through government programs related to support of not-for-profit organizations in the midst of the Pandemic. Due to the time sensitivity of many of these applications they have met on a very regular basis (at times, weekly) in order to handle effectively the work load given to them. We appreciate their thoroughness and sensitivity in handling the issues that come before them.

Right Relations Resource Team

The Right Relations Resource Team is our main link to how we seek to live into Right Relations with our Indigenous Sisters and Brothers. In recent months the team has worked at updating some of the Right Relations Minutes for Mission developed within Manitou Conference, and have encouraged us in our responsibility to identify indigenous communities within the boundaries of our region. As a Commission we encourage all communities of faith to seek meaningful ways to develop and enhance right relations with indigenous communities within or near their pastoral area.

Affirming Ministry Resource Team

The Affirming Ministry Resource Team seeks ways to encourage the region in its intention to be an affirming body within The United Church of Canada. Peter Haddow of our Commission chairs this resource team. The Affirming Ministry Resource Team also is willing to work with groups or communities of faith seeking to enter into an affirming process. We have spent a significant time in two of our meetings looking at the mandate of the Affirming Ministry Resource Team and seeking ways that we can support this resource team in its work. We identified one way to be supportive is to make sure the issue of being an Affirming Ministry is addressed in every Community of Faith when developing a mission statement and seeking clarity in its purpose and sharing in God's mission to the community.

Youth & Young Adult Ministry Resource Team

This resource team, often identified by its shortened acronym YAYA, has played an important role in the early stages of the Canadian Shield Region, but the work of this Resource Team has been limited in the COVID-19 shut down. Face to face meetings with youth have been put on hiatus, and connecting with congregational leaders of youth has been made more challenging. Camping also was not possible in 2020, which affected camper programs at Camp McDougall. Many youth in the region did connect with the virtual Rendezvous gathering originally planned for Calgary in August, 2020. We look forward to a time when this area of our work once again will be a source of energy and excitement.

United Church in Worship Project

George Bott is a member of our Commission and with his partner Joy provides the main support to the United Church in Worship project. Our Commission has supported funding requests of this ministry, and have kept abreast of the ways that this project supports ministry and worship leadership for congregations without regular order of ministry personnel throughout the north. This ministry keeps expanding as more and more congregations are unable to procure ministry leadership, even part time. We feel honoured to be the home region of this outreach ministry.

Other Items of Note:

Equity officer

With issues of fairness in staffing and volunteer allocations becoming front and centre as a society, we discussed the need to have an equity officer in our region. A task group has been established to examine this issue, and will develop a meeting time and report to the Commission in the near future.

Social Justice Network:

Ernie Epp, a member of the Commission, is the Canadian Shield representative to the Social Justice Network of Ontario (along with Will Kunder). Ernie recently reported on that work, and raised concerns as to how we can be faithful as a region in facilitating the social justice work of the region. We agreed this was an area that needed to be addressed by the whole region, and so we have asked for time on the agenda of the Regional meeting in November. This network originally was established over 30 years ago to connect what was then all Conferences within the

province of Ontario in order to have a common United Church voice to address public policy within the province of Ontario.

Members of the Commission (in alphabetical order)

George Bott, Janice Brownlee, Brynn Carson, Ernie Epp, Crystal Greig, Peter Haddow, Bonnie Johnson, Erasmus Madumbu, Mardi Mumford, Marilyn Schatzler, Bill Steadman, Christina Stricker

Secretary: Mardi Mumford

Chairperson: Bill Steadman

Representative to the Canadian Shield Executive: Christina Stricker

Program Staff Support: Melody Duncanson-Hales, Will Kunder, Rob Smith,

Technical Staff Support: Susan Whitehead