

EXECUTIVE MINISTER - YEARLY REPORT

March 2020

Reflecting on Year One

The members of the Transition Commissions were named in the spring of 2018 and started work in June of that year. They focused on purpose, priorities, governance structure, some policies to get us started, job descriptions, and staffing. That focus expanded dramatically in January 2019 as they then carried full responsibility for the Regional Council's Executive and responsibilities for all of the work of partnership with communities of faith.

That changed as of May 2019 when we had our annual meeting, at which time the Commissions were disbanded with appreciation for all their work. The new Regional Council Executive began after the close of the Annual Meeting and the new regional divisions and committees were in their infancy and beginning to take up their mandates.

This year our divisions and committees have begun to become more familiar with their work. As they do that (as per the agreement with the governance structure at the annual meeting to be nimble and flexible), if the committees identify a problem or identify a way to do their work more efficiently, they are encouraged to bring suggested changes to the Executive for approval. This has been happening throughout the year and the governance document is being updated for presentation again at the annual meeting.

All regional councils are experiencing a similar situation with trying to fill their committees, divisions and commissions. It will be important at our annual meetings to encourage people to become involved with the regional work. In some anecdotal conversations people are feeling the loss of what is being called the regular forced gatherings of the Presbytery (Districts has disbanded a year previously) and as of yet have not moved into the identity of the new region. That will come. In some cases, I believe the reason was that some were not wanting, and therefore not ready, for the change. That makes it more difficult for people to take ownership of their region. Some need to take some time to grieve what they have lost and others are taking time to see how it is working before they offer themselves. Others are waiting to see in what area they have a passion before offering to serve. I am so grateful for those who offered themselves to be part of the commission in 2018-2019, to help form a regional structure that has born fruit this year as we live into our identity. I am also thankful for the nominations committees that have tirelessly taken on the role and responsibility to build our committees from the ground up. For the first time since 1925, we have started with a structure that had 100% vacancies for all of our committees, and I am pleased to say that one year later we have people serving in all of our committees and divisions. Thank you for those who worked to make that happen and thank you for those who have been willing to give of themselves, to work through uncertainty, grapple with terms of reference, and begin to live out the ministry of your committees and divisions. This was no small task.

It is very important for communities of faith to elect their official members to the region. Those elected members to the region from their communities of faith are a key connector for the community of faith and the region. You are one of our communications agents in the system. We rely on you to be the person who receives correspondence from the region and brings that to your governing body (board/council). We also rely on you to help your governing body find the policies

and governance documents pertaining to the regions work, to highlight the website, encourage members to sign up for the weekly news and also provide a copy of the regional executive minutes to the board or council quarterly. You are to bring a report from the annual meeting to your communities of faith. You are an important part of the regional structure. We are also asking you to discern with those in your communities of faith who you feel have a passion for, and skills for, the various committees and encourage them to get involved. This region belongs to all of us and we are called to fulfill its ministry together.

Initial Goals

My initial goals were:

- 1) Ensure that any community of faith who needed the services of the regional council on a matter was able to know who to call and get assistance in a timely manner.
Thanks to the responsiveness of the committees and the staff, we have been able to do this, in this year of transition in a good way. As we move into our second year, our hope is that the responsiveness will continue to become timelier.
- 2) Help set the table for the regional council members to take their place. Working with the executives, divisions and committees to discern their role and function.
This goal continues as discernment of role and purpose continues while the work and function of the region moves along. Working with the staff who are a resource to the regional committees and understanding their responsibilities and role a staff resource.
- 3) Responding to inquiries from communities of faith around matters of finances, property and governance in a timely manner. This goal continues and my hope is to be timelier in my response.
- 4) Working with the incorporated ministries committees and where the committees had not been established, working to help the ministries to have their by-laws updated and receive their administrative approval from the general council. This will be a two to three year process.
- 5) To help the committees that I staff resource to become confident in their work. For committees where there were no chairpersons, I chaired the committees in order to bring them together and get them started. Except for one committee, we have all of our chairs and the committees are working.
- 6) To meet regularly with the 10 staff that I supervise (every 8 weeks) for a one on one meeting to discuss workload, well being, concerns and goals. We also have staff gatherings in the region with the staff together every third month.
- 7) To name the United Church representatives to be on a Task Group for the United Church/ Bermuda (WMC) relationship. To work with the Task Group to develop a relationship agreement.

Current Goals

- 1) Facilitating the Leadership of Regional Council Officers
Engaging with the Presidents and the Annual Meeting Planning Committees in preparation for the regional council meetings. To date, the agendas are being shaped by work that needs attention as the building blocks of our life as a regional council continue.
- 2) Working with the Regional Ministers to assess ways to support ministry personnel and communities of faith in the Region.

- 3) Working with the Office Managers to finalize the financials to go to the Auditor for the 2019 Audit so it is ready for the Annual meeting.
- 4) Working with the regional committees to prepare the Regional Budgets for 2021 to present to the Regional Council.
- 5) Being the connection between the General Council and the Region, along with the staff helping to highlight initiatives from the General Council that will help communities of faith in their ministries.
- 6) Identifying gaps - working with the executive, committees, division and staff to identify gaps that need to be addressed. A couple of gaps are connection for the communities of faith to the Region and communication flow. Two pieces we will need to continue to work on.
- 7) Support to the executive and the presidents for the quarterly meetings and any extra meetings required.
- 8) Working with the reviews and the appeals in the regions.
- 9) Asset Management- One of the key functions of my role is to manage our assets both in terms of finances and staff.

Operating Fund

As we move towards the end of the calendar year, it is reassuring to see that our budget predictions were in the ballpark of our actual expenses. Understanding of course that our committees have not used their full budgeted amounts as they were starting up in 2019. We ended the 2019 year in a surplus position, but have a projected deficit for 2020. The 2021 budget process is underway and we will have to give attention to potential cuts from the M&S funds.

Restricted and Unrestricted Fund

Working with the Office Managers and the finance committees to identify the funds from Presbyteries/Conference that fall into these two categories and help write policies and update applications for grants from these funds. Working to consolidate funds with a similar purpose and determine how they will be accessed.

Working with the Finance Committees around an investment policy and a policy for a contingency fund.

Working with the Office Manager and the General Council Office CFO around the Mortgage for the office building located in Sackville, and working through some major maintenance/repairs for the Sackville office building.

Staffing

We said farewell to our Children, Youth and Young Adult Minister, Lauren King as they embarked on a new job close to their home. While we miss them, we are happy for them and wish them well.

We put in place a process to hire a new staff person to fulfill this role for our regions. We received the short list from the General Council Office, conducted interviews, and selected a new candidate, Rev. Catherine Stuart and are providing her with her orientation.

I am filled with gratitude for all those who have worked hard to help our regions get up and running. Our communities of faith and our ministry personnel and all of our wonderful volunteers. A big shout out to all of our staff who have given so much of themselves to their ministry amongst us! We have experienced many changes in our first year. It takes resilience, hard work, patience and a deep faith. Held by the spirit we move forward in faith.