

First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council 16



E-Connect



SHARING OUR FAITH THROUGH OUR
STORIES

Volume No. 1

2021 Spring Issue

Welcome to E-Connect, our first electronic and printable publication where we will share stories of faith to connect us as a region. This quarterly publication may be freely shared with congregations by the delegates.

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Welcoming Your Communications Team

Editor-in-Chief - Rev. Marilyn Rees
Co-Editors - Rev. Stephen Barbour
Rev. Limon Daka
Bill Matchem, DLM

Welcome to our 1st E-Connect issue

Our biblical ancestors were people filled with stories of inspiration and challenge, as they trusted in the Creator. And we, as members of First Dawn Eastern Edge, sense that same kinship, and this past year has given us many stories of challenges and blessings to share, assuring us that we do not journey alone; for like people of our sacred scriptures, we also have experienced God's Presence and Hope.

We are inviting you to share your stories through this quarterly publication, so all may be lifted in faith.

Those wishing to submit items for our Fall publication, please do so by deadline, August 30th. Items may be submitted to the following e-mail address..

merees@eastlink.ca.

This publication will be as rich and informative as the articles and stories you share. Wishing you a safe and relaxing summer.

NOTE: If you would like to be a part of this exciting team, please contact Rev. Marilyn at the above address.

"Presence & Hope" 2021 Spring Meeting

God's "Presence and Hope" amid Covid obstacles for gathering, was our theme, and our experience, as 120 plus delegates gathered on **Friday, May 14** to joyfully celebrate our 3rd annual meeting of First Dawn Eastern Edge Region, but our second virtual meeting. Just seeing each other's smiles and laughter, hearing "hellos" and connecting our voices in song and worship as people of faith, reassured us how God's Presence and Hope will always sustain us. Thoughts of COVID-19 faded in the background as President, Rev. Peggy Johnson, welcomed all and invited Rev. Gneid Lackey to lead us in our opening worship. Rev. Grant Stuckless, our incoming president, introduced our theme, "Presence and Hope" and welcomed Dr. Erin Powell to animate ways its visible in her life. Next, Rev. Heather



Sandford, our Regional Minister, led us in a prayerful slide presentation remembering loved ones who passed since our last gathering. Moderator, The Right Rev. Richard Bott, then graced us with a short message of hope. The court was also blessed with greetings from our newly elected General Secretary, Michael Blair. Break-out rooms then gave us time to connect and discuss where we found God's Presence and Hope in our lives this past while.

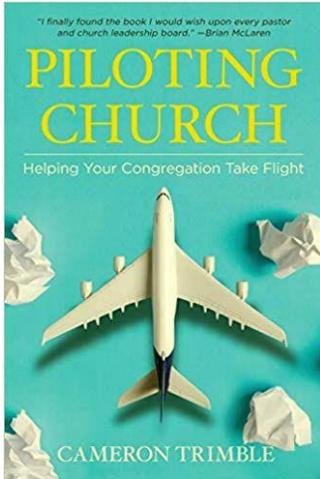
President Peggy then invited Andrew Richardson, Office of Vocation Minister, to introduce Rev. Limon Daka and Rebecca Pike, DM who would be recognized on Sunday at our Celebration of Ministries service.

Enabling and procedural motions were then shared by Rev. Stephanie McClellan & Cecil Noseworthy before break time.

"Presence & Hope" (continued)

Reports from each division (previously shared through webinars) were then accepted.

Then, Rev. Faith March-MacCuish, Executive Minister, introduced our dynamic theme speaker, *Rev Cameron Trimble, CEO of Convergence*. As an avid pilot, she began offering insight from her flying experience, on how we may



revision "church", question the way we do things to change our perspective on "who we are and what we do" if we want to develop the eyes to see the opportunities that are before us as "church". Despite the financial meltdown, climate breakdown, Covid lockdown, and racial throwdown and Christian let down, the hope is that our eyes have been opened to see how rules, systems and institutions are shaping new

values, beliefs and religion. She noted "online church as being here to stay" – as one example. It will take commitment yet "we owe it to ourselves to sharpen our skills" and be committed to revision the "church" if we want to soar above the challenges in today's society and become "airborne once again". Friday session closed with vespers led by Rev. Gneid.

Saturday, May 15, 2021

Saturday morning began, in usual United Church style, with "singing our faith" accompanied by gifted musicians throughout the Region. Then Rev. Peggy Johnson welcomed everyone, and opened the morning session by acknowledging the land on which we live. Once again, we were treated to our enthusiastic theme speaker, Rev. Cameron Trimble, who began by outlining the pattern of life that we are seeing in the world today. Using once again her experience as a pilot, she offered these insights and principles of leadership if we wish to move forward...

(a) We need to move from order to disorder as we just did in this pandemic. Young families are not attracted to the way we package church, so we need to move from "organized religion" to "organizing religion" and be obsessed with quality-of-life indicators and not the numbers in the pews.

"Open the space and let the Spirit flow through"

(b) Revisit and know our "why" we are Christian, why the United Church? Ask those deep questions and journey with adventure as you "craft your vision together." Ask ourselves "what we stand for as opposed to what we stand against."

(c) Think of ministry as an experiment – "if no one's going to die, give it a try." Constantly seek ways to combat likely

any negativism. **(d) Failure is always a part of any way forward, look at it "positively"** as moments of learning the way to victory. **(e) Until we crash, we aren't done.** Like a pilot, "fly the plane" and help it rise above the ashes. Keep showing up with a spirit of curiosity. **(f) We are all in this together** - Remember as people of God, we are always being called, as people in the past to change and "be church" for our times. Our call is "to not give up and journey on with God as our pilot".

More insight from Rev. Cameron can be gleaned from her book, titled "**Piloting Church: Helping Your Congregation Take Flight**". This book may be ordered through FDEE Bookstore (l laundry@united-church.ca).

After Cameron's insightful sharing, it was back to business with the election of President-Elect, Rev. Nancy Mojica-Fisher, and a report from Mission & Service.

To clue up our morning session, we were led to new heights by Rev. Catherine Stewart and Linnea Good who actively uplifted us in a Ukulele Church worship.

Our afternoon session gathered once again with music and singing. The first item of business was discussing and accepting a proposal prepared by FDEE's Designated Lay Ministers and presented by Rev. Paula Gale.

Rev. Faith March-MacCuish then presented her remarks of the past year within our region, through sharing a parable that highlighted that through our difficulties, we have been given new possibilities. She thanked the clergy for striving to answer the call. President Peggy thanked Rev. Faith for the exemplary manner in which she has guided us through this challenging year -- not only through our church restructuring but for her unwavering presence throughout this pandemic, ready to respond to all our emails and needs.

Rev. Peggy Johnson, our outgoing President, then shared her remarks on how it has been a different year for her as President, unable to visit many congregations in person, yet, she expressed how she will be forever thankful to the court for the wonderful privilege and blessing in being called to serve. She shared deep appreciation for all who rose to the challenges during the pandemic and how they still found ways to connect and offer worship and support for their members.

The following reports were then shared **(a)** a power point presentation of the **GO Project** highlights; **(b)** Lisa Browne, **Stella's Circle, CEO**, highlighted their lifegiving work and expressed thanks to our Church for support; **(c)** a report from **The SING 2025 Project**, on progress toward a new hymn resource for our 100th Anniversary in 2025.

President Peggy then welcomed **John Young, General Council Representative**, who shared highlights of the church's future strategic plans.

The last two business items of the day were receiving and approving the 2020 Auditor's report, our 2021 Financial report and the 2022 Budget. President Peggy thanked Roy West for both reports and called for motions to approve. Voting for members to serve as Commissioners to General Council were held. *(Introductions had already been shared at a previous webinar)*

To close off our Regional Business at the end of the day, our gathering was uplifted by a worshipful reflection led by our Youth Forum. We parted for dinner break.



At 6:30, we reconvened to honour our retirees and lift up their "Milestones in Ministry". Thanks to the blessing of Zoom, many retired clergy enjoyed a delightful evening of laughter, and connecting,

from across the country with colleagues. Thanks to our Regional Minister, Rev. Heather, and all others who created a power point of memories in their honour. The Court also paid tribute, through song, to Rev. Laura Hunter who is leaving us. Rev. Faith wished her well.

The evening adjourned and closed in prayer. Many thanks were expressed to Rev. Gneid and the Liturgy Team for uplifting worship moments this past weekend. While business was over, kitchen party time was on and many stayed to relax and share stories, poem and songs.

Sunday, May 16, 2021

Sunday afternoon, delegates gathered at 2pm via livestream for worship as we joined in the Celebration of Ministries from Wesley United Church. Though we would all have loved to be present to congratulate Diaconal



Minister Rebecca Pike and Rev. Limon Daka, members actively joined offering streams of good wishes online, as they were received. The court also joyously shared welcome "posts" to our newly elected President Rev.

Grant Stuckless.

Our worship ended a weekend filled with God's "Presence and Hope"; of connecting, learning and celebrating.

Though we had many hours on Zoom, many went their separate ways feeling blessed to have been together. and spiritually energized to keep "soaring" to share God's Hope and Presence with this world.

Meet your Newly Elected President Rev. Grant Stuckless



Rev. Grant Stuckless being received as our newly elected President at the Celebration of Ministries Service on May 16th at Wesley United Church, St. John's

Greetings From President Rev. Grant



I wish you God's blessings as President of First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council. With our theme, "Presence and Hope", I thank you for your ongoing connection to your church. We are staying faithful. We continue to worship safely through video-conferencing. In-person, we

are limiting how many come to church with capacity limits, distancing, pre-registering, masking, vaccinating and by limiting singing. By phone calls and visiting the doorstep of our isolated church family, with physical distance, we show God's presence is everlasting in changing times.

Your executive and teams continue to be present as well. Thank you to Rev. Faith and Rev. Heather for leading us through many changes. May we re-emerge into more open times, as our Lord and Saviour Jesus emerged from the tomb and as the Holy Spirit keeps inspiring us. In all things, friends, may God bless you with hope as you stay present to one another in Christ's love.

Rev. Grant Stuckless

President

First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council

Farewell with Gratitude Past President, Rev. Peggy Johnson

My earliest recollection of participating in church life is doing a recitation at our Sunday School Mother’s Day Program in in 1946, at age six. In varying stages throughout the next 75 years, involvement in church life became an integral part of my journey; culminating in my Ordination and subsequently being elected the first President of our newly formed First Dawn Eastern Edge Region in 2019.



I am truly humbled for I had never dreamed of receiving such an honour! Regrettably, my hopes of honouring your requests for sharing your times of celebration were dashed when the Pandemic of 2019 interrupted our lives.

The Pandemic certainly represents the unprecedented worst of times for our church in recorded history. With church sanctuaries closed and social distancing affecting even families, we were suddenly thrown into being forced to connect with each other through virtual communication.

However, the efforts of clergy, lay persons and staff in maintaining the spiritual wellbeing of our Communities of Faith is equally unprecedented. Everyone rose to the occasion of meeting prevailing needs while encountering the steepest of learning curves through online connections.

But we did it! Thank God!

My fondest memory of these two years will always be how we became the embodiment of Christ’s Gospel in action - lovingly caring, sharing and maintaining hope.

My sincere thanks to all of you for your support and for granting me the privilege of serving as your President.

With love and blessings,
Rev. Peggy Johnson



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Staying Informed & Connected

Want to keep informed and know what’s new within your Region?

Ways to stay connected --

Get a weekly update on First Dawn Eastern Edge’s **Facebook page** at the following link. [First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council, The United Church of Canada | Facebook](#)



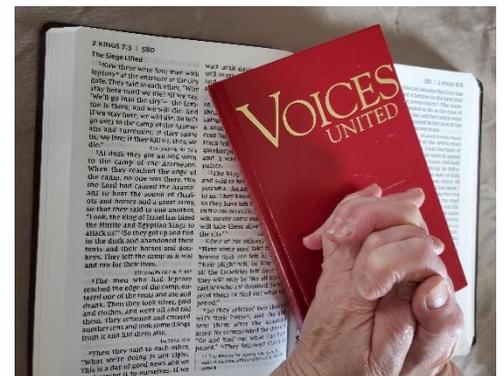
FDEE also has a **website** that will keep you up to date. If you need to information on policies, handbooks, forms and contact information for staff. [First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council - The United Church of Canada \(ucecast.ca\)](#)

To keep abreast of the latest news of what’s happening from the wider church at the national level of this United Church of Ours, you may go to the United Church of Canada’s website where you can hear stories of mission, or find out about upcoming events and webinars. It’s all on the website [Home Page | The United Church of Canada \(united-church.ca\)](#).

Coming in our Next Issue in September

Recollections and thoughts about ministry in this United Church of ours from clergy within First Dawn Eastern Edge.

Don’t Miss Out.



Wishing you a blessed and safe summer from us,

Members of the First Dawn Eastern Edge Communications Team