

DIVISION OF MINISTRY RESOURCES

The mandate of this Division is to provide leadership, oversight and guidance to the activities of the Committees that support Human and Ministry Resources in Region 15.

The five Committees of this Division are Faith Story Community Covenant, Future Directions, Licensing, Pastoral Relations and Retiree Support.

The members that serve on this Division are Anne Cameron, Chair; Janet Sollows, Secretary; Heather Fraser, Chair of Faith Story Community Covenant; Carol Smith, Chair of Future Directions; John Moses, Chair of Licensing; Tom Woods, Chair of Pastoral Relations and Ruth Gamble, Chair of Retiree Support. Region 15 Staff Support are David Hewitt and Faith March-MacCuish.

The Division of Ministry Resources met quarterly during the year and had four special meetings. These meetings were by Zoom. The five Committees of this Division are actively carrying out their mandate according to the Governance Handbook for Region 15. A reminder that the list of Pastoral Charges/Faith Communities and Ministry Personnel can be found on the Region 15 website(ucceast.ca). Information on the Division and its Committees and their work can also be found on the Region 15 website.

Plans are in the works for an in- person retreat style/meeting for the Division and all its committees, and is scheduled for mid-week in late September. The purpose of this meeting is to share the work of each committee and to be better understand the work assigned to each committee and what each committee needs to enable them to do their work well and how we will make this happen.

Special thanks and appreciation to our Region 15 support staff - Faith March-MacCuish, Jennifer Taylor, David Hewitt, Jennifer Whittemore and Tracey Rose. Thank you to the members of the Division, Committees and Liaisons for your passion and commitment to the United Church of Canada.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Cameron, Chair

Faith Stories and Community Covenants Committee

For the past several years, the Faith Stories and Community Covenants Committee has been discerning our role within the new structure of Region 15. After a good deal of conversation with a number of Committee members, staff, and the occasional guest who came to discern with us, and perhaps a couple of false starts, we can say several things about what we feel we are called to do with the resources that we have.

- Our committee is called to support the Covenant relationship between Communities of Faith and Region 15, at times when Communities of Faith are not in a Pastoral Relations process, or in discernment of their Future Directions.
- Our primary goal is to help Communities of Faith discern their Mission, one of the three pillars of the Strategic Plan. Once they are in conversation with their Mission in the world as Christ's disciples, they will then be able to make clearer and more effective Covenants with their leadership and the Region.
- While the Manual and the Governance Document expect that we will be working one on one with Communities of Faith, the number of CoFs in Region 15 makes that a daunting challenge for our small committee. Therefore, we are focussing our work on what we can do with groups of CoFs, to get the best bang for our buck.

To live out these understandings, in this past year we have taken on two large tasks to engage with Communities of Faith this year.

The first task, launched at the Annual Meeting in 2021, was to distribute a Self-Assessment Form to all the Communities of Faith in Region 15. With an extension of the original deadline, the data collection phase was completed by fall 2021. About 2/3 of the CoFs sent in their responses, a very good response rate. The collected data was summarized in charts and other forms, and that summary report is included in this Annual Report. Have a look at it, it's a quick read, and has a lot of information about where our Region was in 2021.

In addition to the summary report, the complete database with all responses listed by Community of Faith was distributed to all Divisions and Committees, to assist them in their work.

The second task, in progress now, is to host workshops helping Communities of Faith to prepare their Living Faith Stories. While most of the work on Faith Stories since restructuring has happened as part of a Pastoral Relations process, the original intention was to have CoFs discern their Faith Stories at other times than in search mode, when there is a certain time pressure to get the job done, and keep revisiting Faith Stories on a regular basis, so that discernment of their mission in the world is an ongoing activity.

Our workshops, the first of which is scheduled in early May, will bring together clusters of Communities of Faith, to learn how to do this work in a group setting. There will be an education component, about the purpose of a Living Faith Story, some time given to do some discernment together, and exercises sent home to do with their Community of Faith, so they can do the work together. Our hope is to do one or two more sessions in the fall.

In addition to the work, we have also been in communication this year with the other committees in our Division of Ministry Resources, because the more we do this work, the more we find big points of intersection, particularly with Pastoral Relations and Future Directions. The Division is designing a retreat-style meeting tentatively scheduled for early fall 2022, to talk about the work

of the whole Division, and hopefully come up with some better understandings of where one Committee's work ends so that another's can begin.

Creating a Region from scratch is a challenge, and with God's help, we have what we need to meet that challenge. But we certainly don't do the work alone. We wish to acknowledge the staff of Region 15, Tracey Rose, Jennifer Taylor, and Jennifer Whittemore, all of whom lent a hand to our work in the past year, also Faith Marsh-McCuish for good advice, and David Hewitt, who resources our meetings, and knows more about how the new structure works than I would have thought possible. And most of all, I wish to thank Anne Cameron, our Division of Ministry Resources Chair, whose constant support (and not a little cajoling to extract this report from me) has been a joy from beginning to end.

The Rev. Heather Fraser, Chair
Faith Stories and Community Covenants Committee of Region 15.

How Are We Doing? A Report on the 2021 Self-Assessments of the Communities of Faith in Region 15

This is a snapshot from mid-2021 of how the Communities of Faith in Region 15 living out their mission as the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in the world. On the following pages you can see the answers that the Communities of Faith in Region 15 gave us when we asked, in many different ways, "How are you doing?" We are deeply grateful for all the sharing that was freely given, as a gift to help us help each other.

The Self-Assessment for Communities of Faith is a new Manual requirement of the Regional structure. The exact form of the Self-Assessment was left up to the Regions. When designing our form, we wanted to make sure that it was easy to fill out by a volunteer, and gave us answers that were short enough that we could work with them in an Excel spreadsheet. We asked the Divisions and Committees of Region 15 to submit questions that would help their work, and designed other questions to stimulate discussion within the Communities of Faith about what they are doing and how they are feeling about it. We tried as much as possible to ask questions that would help Communities of Faith to discern their Mission.

Ninety distinct groups out of the 136 Communities of Faith submitted a Self-Assessment, a very good rate of return. Some multi-point Pastoral Charges did an Assessment for their charge as a whole, some did an Assessment for each point. Dalhousie Chaplaincy also gave us a Self-Assessment, with a few notes about the ways our Form didn't address their particular situation.

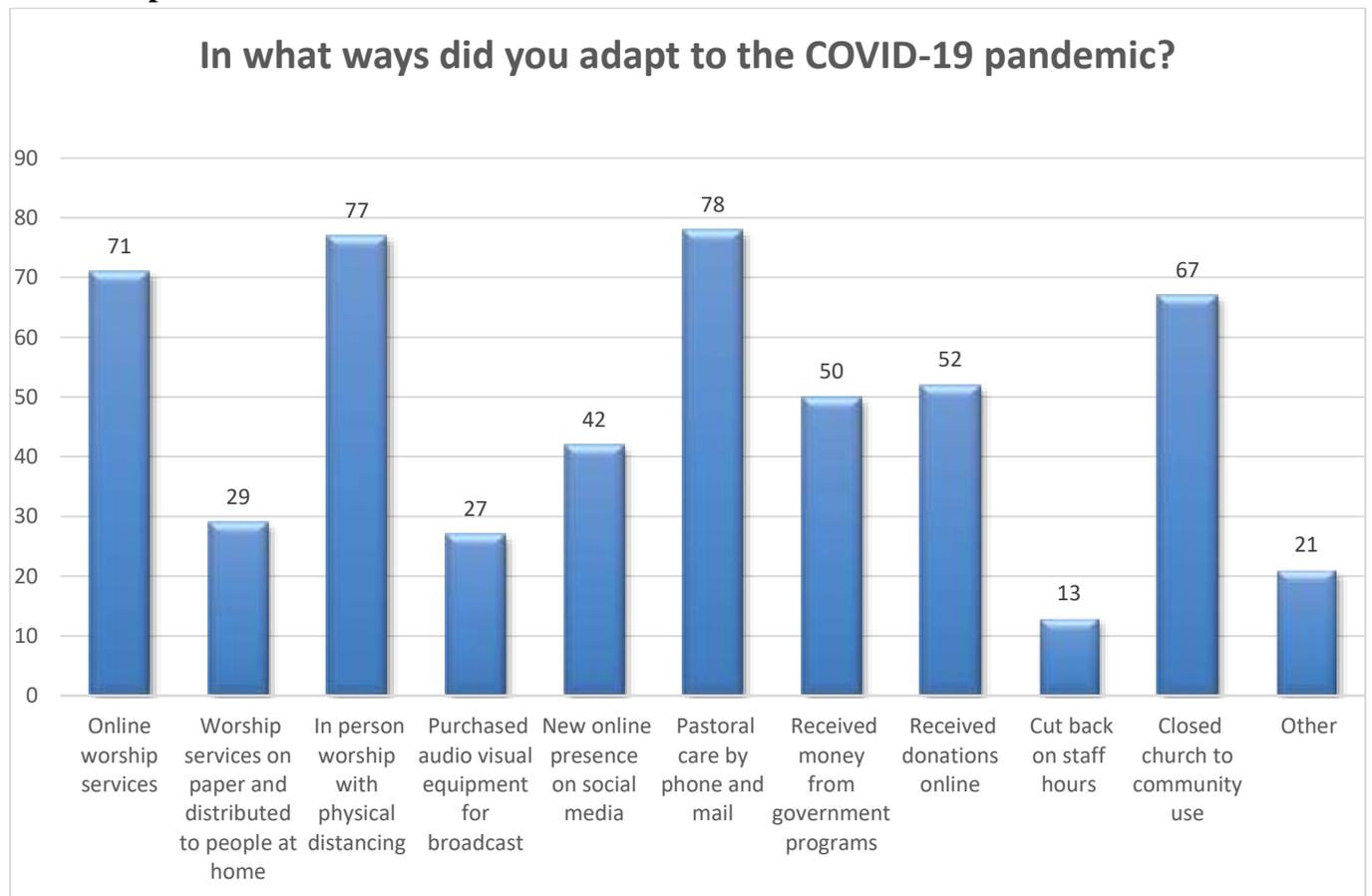
This was intended to be a trial run. We are learning how to do self-assessment, and what the Region can do with the information. Doing the process was at least as important as the data we

This question was generated by the Faith Stories and Community Covenants Committee, to give Councils and Boards a conversation starter about their Mission in their Community of Faith. This is a first step in developing a Living Faith Story, another new requirement of the Regional structure.

We got a lot more than Five Words from many of you, and the words reflected your hopes, and in some cases a few anxieties. We put the words into a Word Cloud, where the size of the word reflects the number of times it was listed. The number one word was Caring, named by 23 of the 90 responses, followed by Supportive and Resilient at 17 occurrences each.

There were also a significant minority of more challenging words, sometimes paired up with a corresponding positive word. We want to honour those who had the courage to say that not everything in their CoF is already perfect.

Covid Responses:

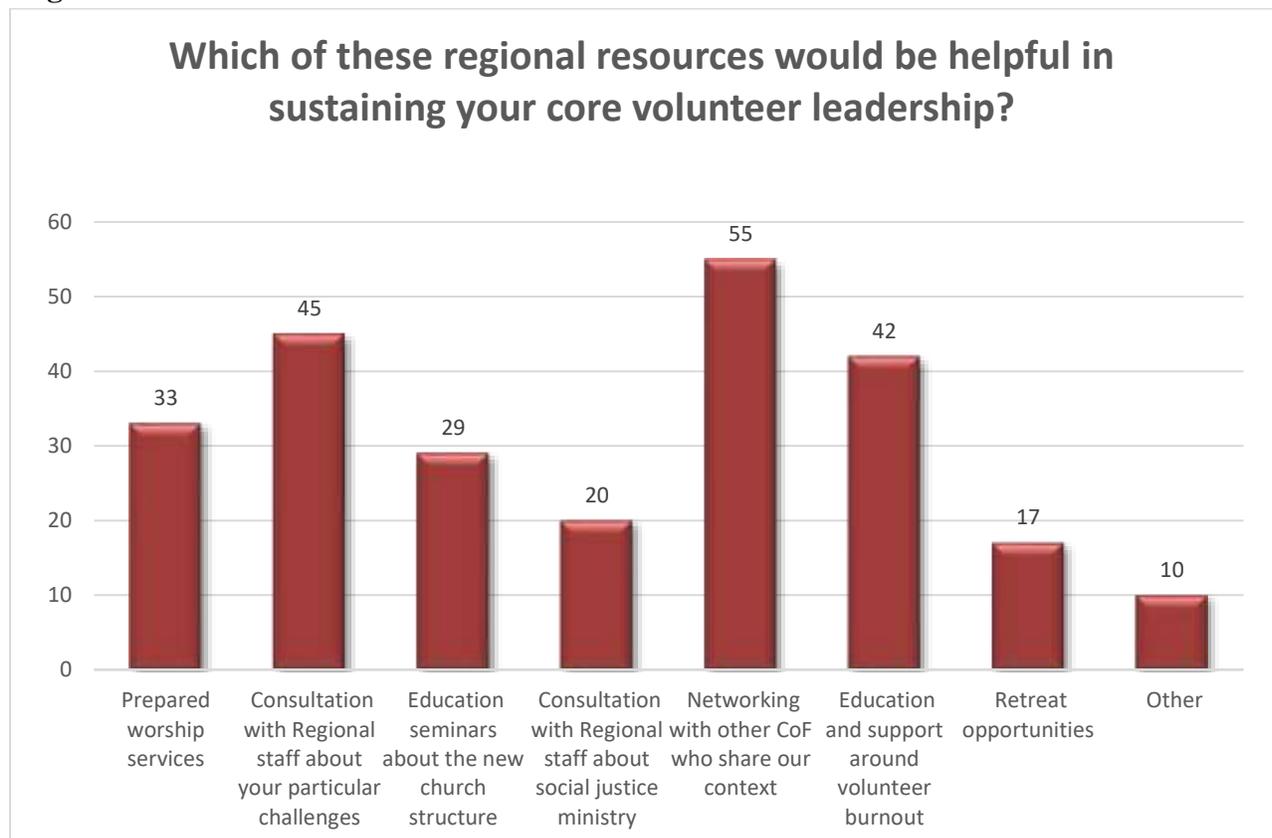


This question was asked to see how Communities of Faith were doing under Covid, and was sparked by questions around Covid fatigue from the Faith Formation and Leadership Development Committee. We provided the categories and asked CoFs to check all the ones that applied.

The Other category allowed CoFs to tell us what else they had been up to that didn't fit the categories. There were far too many to be listed here, we are an inventive bunch. A sampling includes:

- Dalhousie Chaplaincy office was closed by the University.
- Drive in church and radio services.
- Zoom meetings (of course).
- Drop off offerings.
- Church news in community newsletter.
- Participated in online worship of other churches.
- Community suppers went take out.
- Staff worked from home, and were set up with equipment to make it possible.
- Front porch visits.
- Care packages made by children and sent out as pastoral care.
- Mental health specific pastoral care in online groups with young families.
- Made videos to lift the spirits and shared them by social media.

Regional Resources



This question was asked because we wanted to provide information to the Region about what services Communities of Faith wanted to have from their Region. We provided the categories, and asked CoFs to check all that applied.

The Other category allowed congregations to add other suggestions. Specific things asked for included:

On call resources.

Community Outreach Educational How-tos.

The ability to be linked with other Outreach ministries in Region 15.

How to reach indigenous communities.

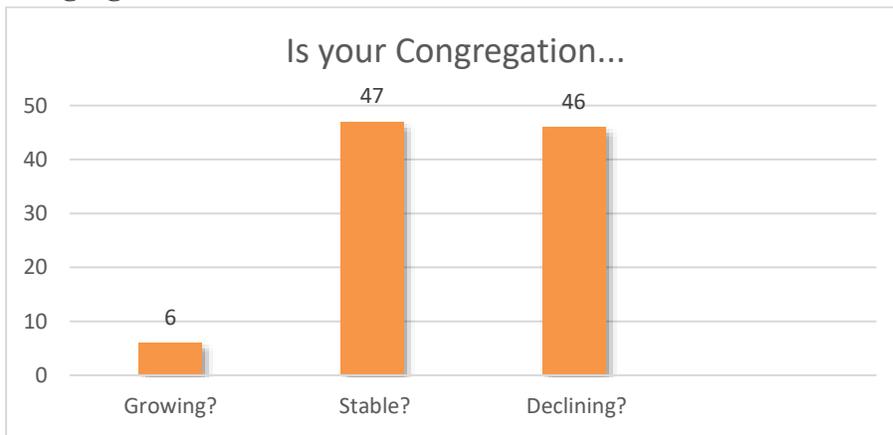
Regions should have professional AV staff advisors for COFs.

Information about what is going on at national that doesn't come directly through clergy.

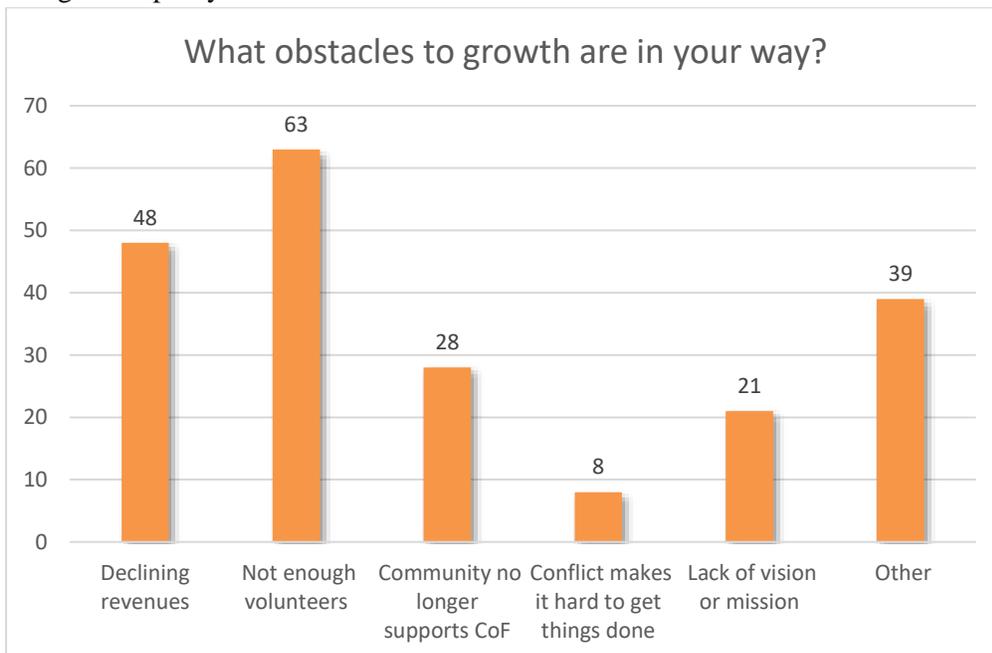
Education on generational differences and engaging the missing generations.

Education about doing pastoral care.

Congregational Health



This question was asked to get a global snapshot in time of how well the congregations think they were doing in the past year.



This question was asked to discern some of the challenges facing congregations in the Region, and was generated by the Division of Finance & Accountability. We provided the categories, and asked CoFs to check all that applied.

The Other category allowed congregations to add other suggestions. Specific things mentioned included:

Dal Chaplaincy feels invisible to Region 15, churches don't promote them to Grade 12 students.

Aging congregation, said many times over.

Members need to give more financially.

Burn out.

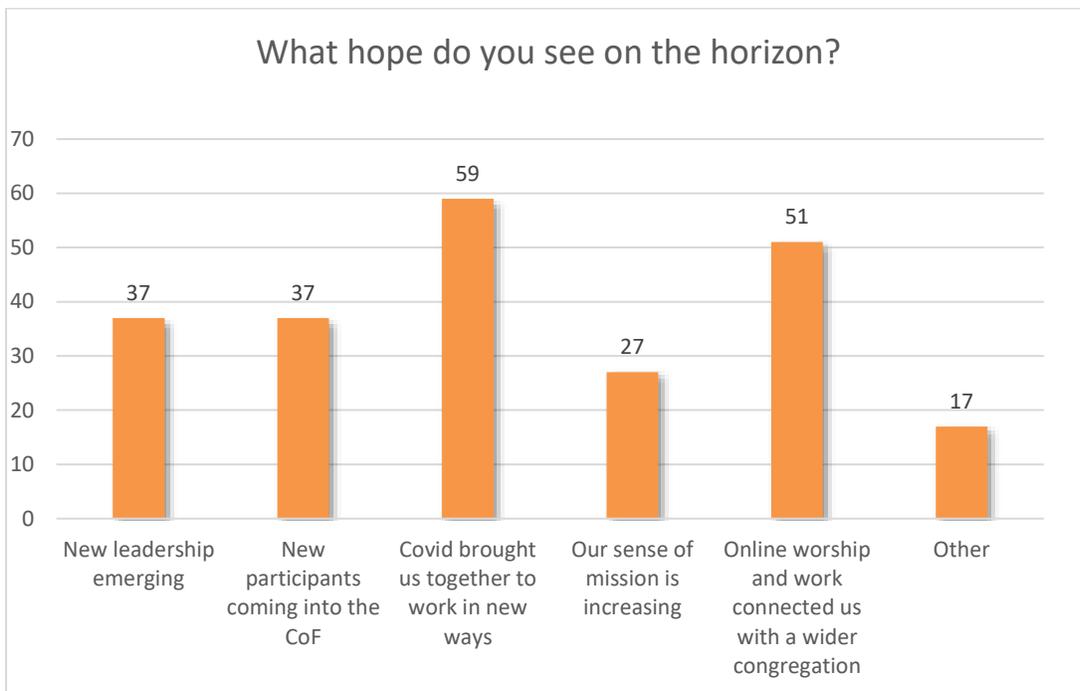
Distance between the points of a multi-point charge.

Physical building capacity.

Lack of importance to the surrounding society.

Covid keeping people apart, which makes big decisions hard.

Generation attitudes to volunteering have changed.

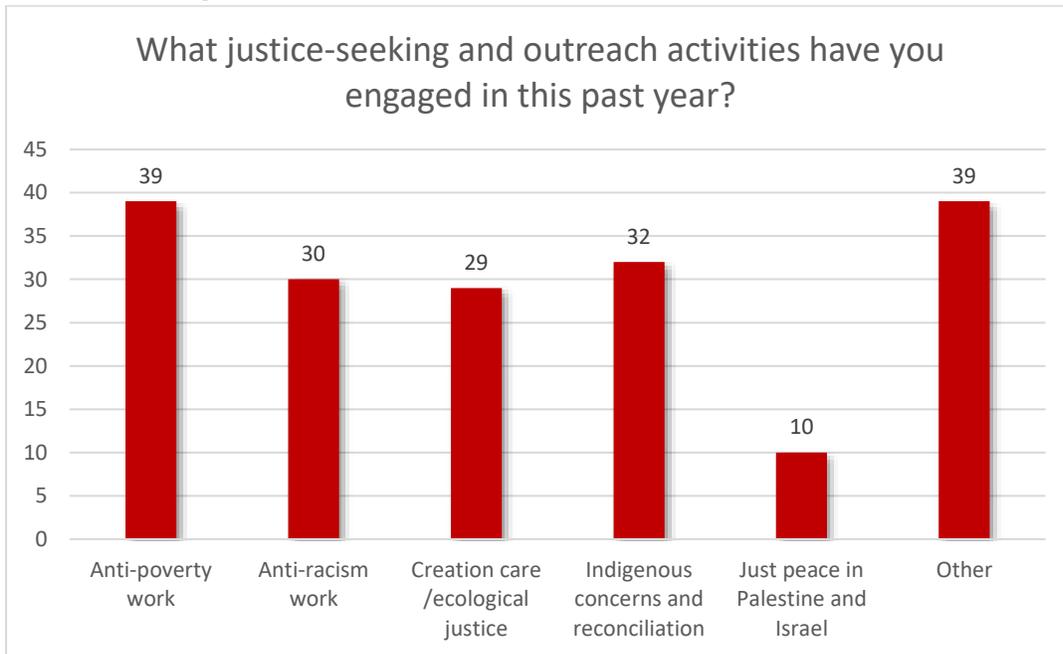


This question was asked to discern some of the challenges facing congregations in the Region, and was generated by the Division of Finance & Accountability. We provided the categories, and asked CoFs to check all that applied.

The Other category allowed congregations to add other suggestions. Specific things mentioned included:

- Eagerness to resume activities in person.
- We have developed new, creative ways of working.
- New volunteer leadership is emerging.
- Moving to a place of our own, re-imagining how to do and be church there.
- Increased interest in outreach.
- Being guided by God and finding a language to express our faith.
- Just beginning a time of Intentional Interim Ministry.

Justice Seeking and Outreach



This question was asked to learn about what kind of justice and outreach work was ongoing in Communities of Faith in Region 15, and was generated by the Justice, Mission and Outreach Committee. They provided the categories, and we asked CoFs to check all that applied.

The Other category allowed congregations to add other suggestions. Specific activities mentioned included:

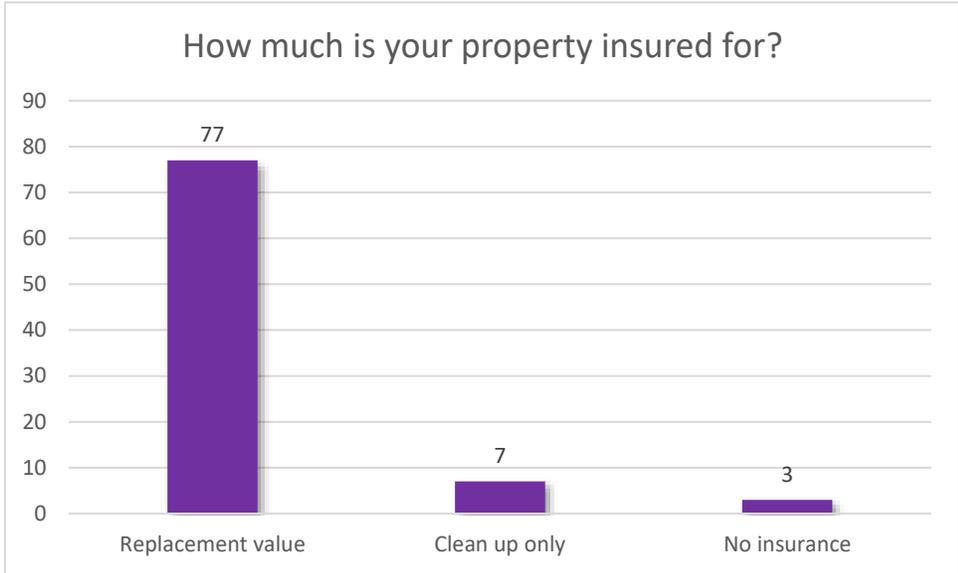
- Many Affirming CoFs, including the only Affirming university Chaplaincy in Canada.
- Individual aid, including community cupboards and Food Banks.
- Sponsoring at least six Syrian families.
- Prayer shawl ministry.
- Support for Mission and Service Fund.
- Supported AA, women's shelters, and other community services.
- Worked for low housing costs and a living wage.

Preaching on all these and more issues during the year.

And a telling caution for our times:

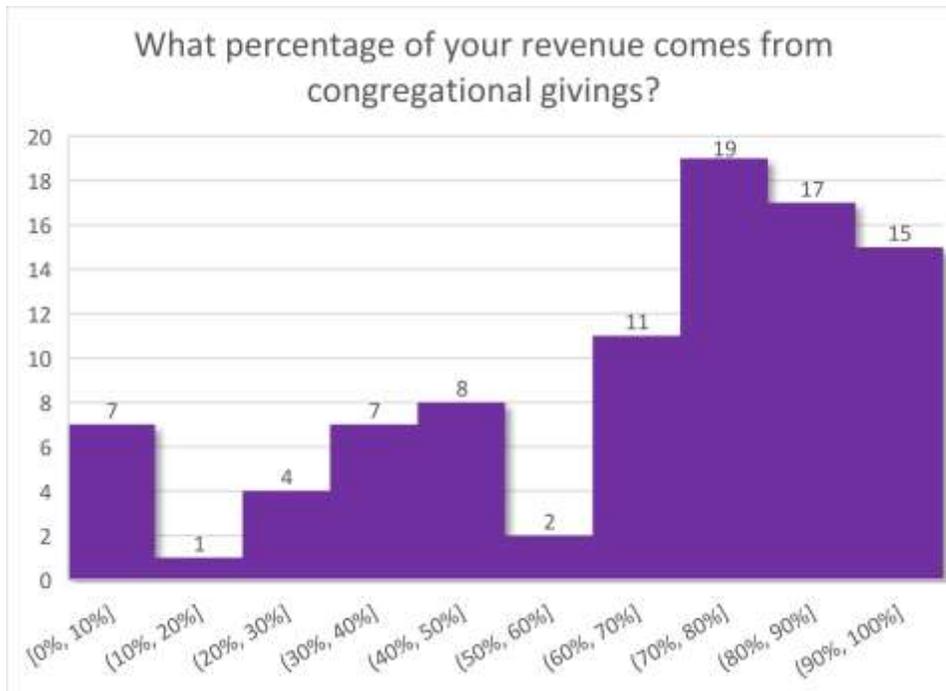
Because of church closures, we have lost continuity as a church, individuals have contributed in personal areas of interest

Finances and Property



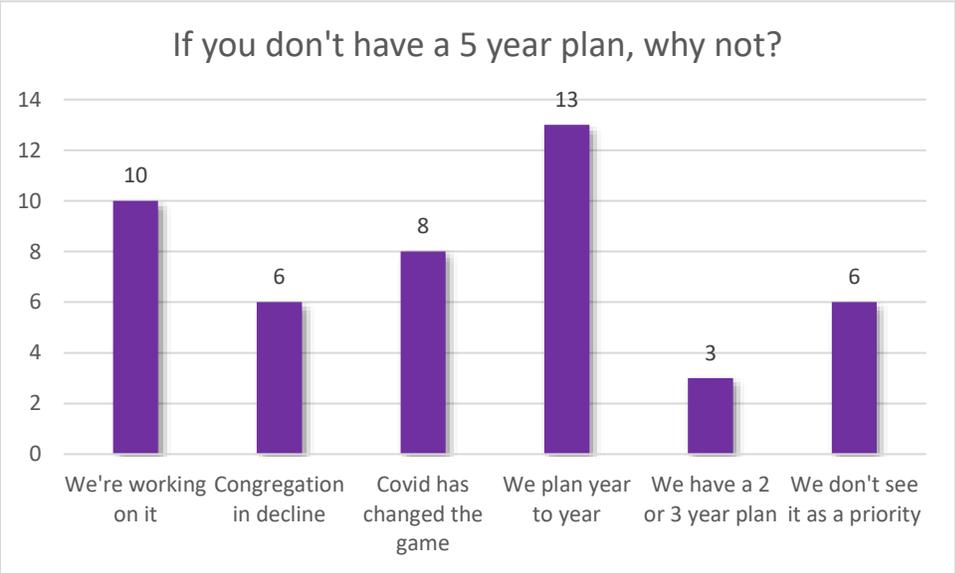
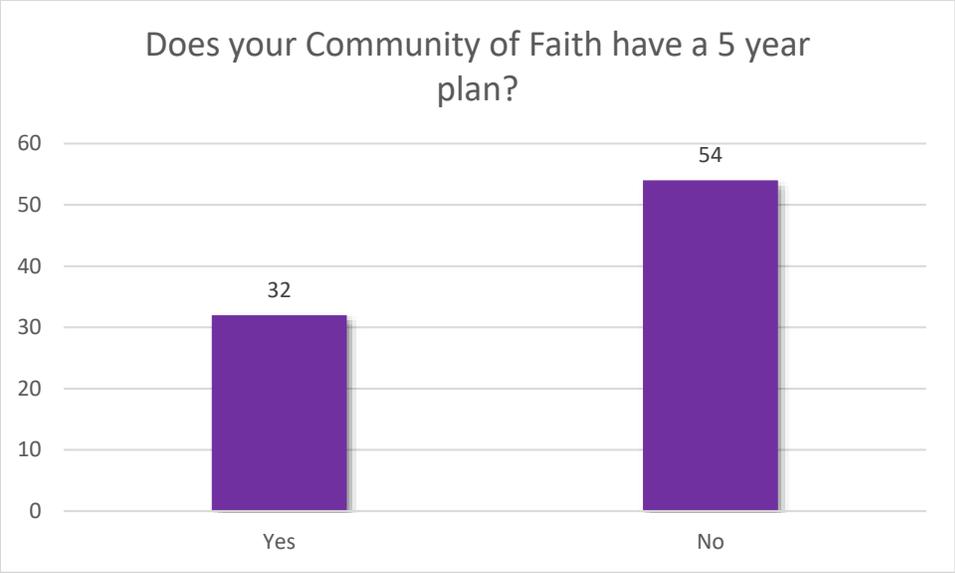
This question was asked to determine if Communities of Faith had adequate insurance, and was generated by the Executive Minister.

We offered these three options, though we note there were four comments about insurance in the Last Thoughts section, one from a CoF which had insurance for partial replacement, one from a renter which only has tenant's insurance, one with liability insurance only, and the Dalhousie Chaplaincy, which noted it owns no property of its own.



This question was asked to get a snapshot of how reliant Communities of Faith were on givings to fund their activities. The question was generated by the Financial Accountability Committee. The answers were reported in 10% increments for display in the histogram. In several cases where a CoF reported an estimated range or different values for multiple points, the middle of the range was used.

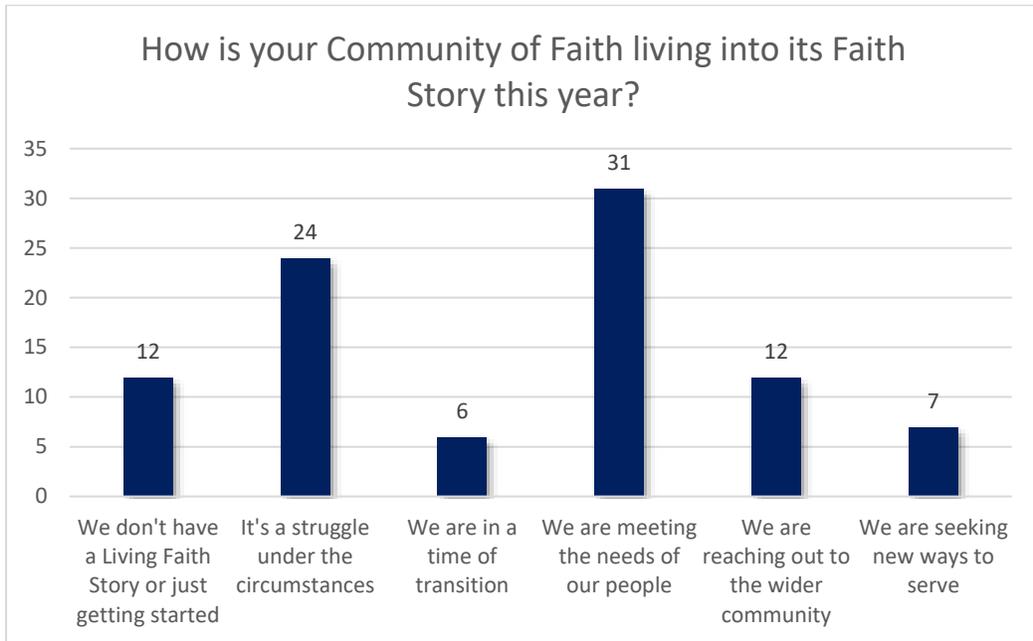
A close look at the data suggests that this was a difficult figure for many CoFs to come up with. There were a number of responses that said they didn't know, or there were very wide ranges given, or narrative answers like "The majority." The question represents a challenge to a traditional understanding of how CoFs fund their activities, from their offering plates. Congregational membership and givings are dropping in most CoFs, and many churches are struggling to pay their bills. An expectation that the offering plate will pay the whole shot is increasingly unrealistic. We see evidence that that expectation is hard to uproot, though, because several CoFs said congregational givings funded 100% of their budget, though they are known to have rentals and other streams of income.



This question and the one before were asked to encourage longer range planning in Communities of Faith, and were generated by the Division of Finance & Accountability.

This question had a short answer format, where CoFs had an opportunity to answer in their own words. After receiving the responses, they were divided into the six broad categories above that covered the range of answers we received.

Faith Stories

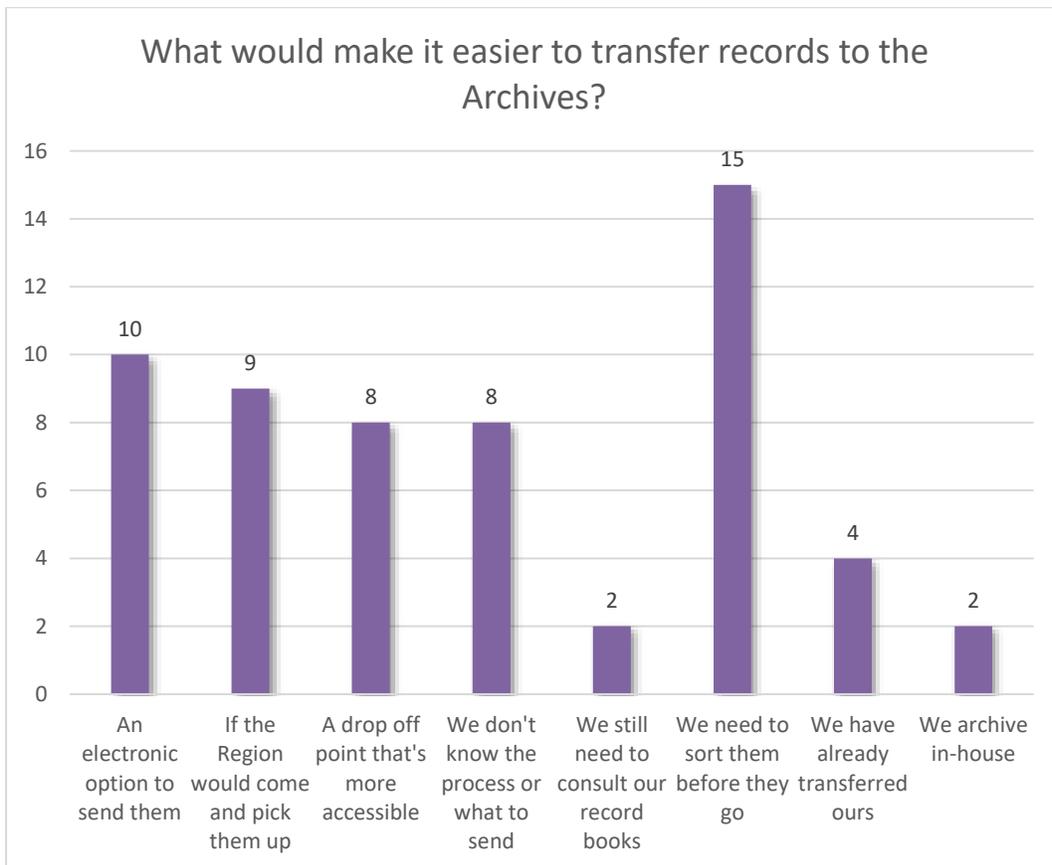
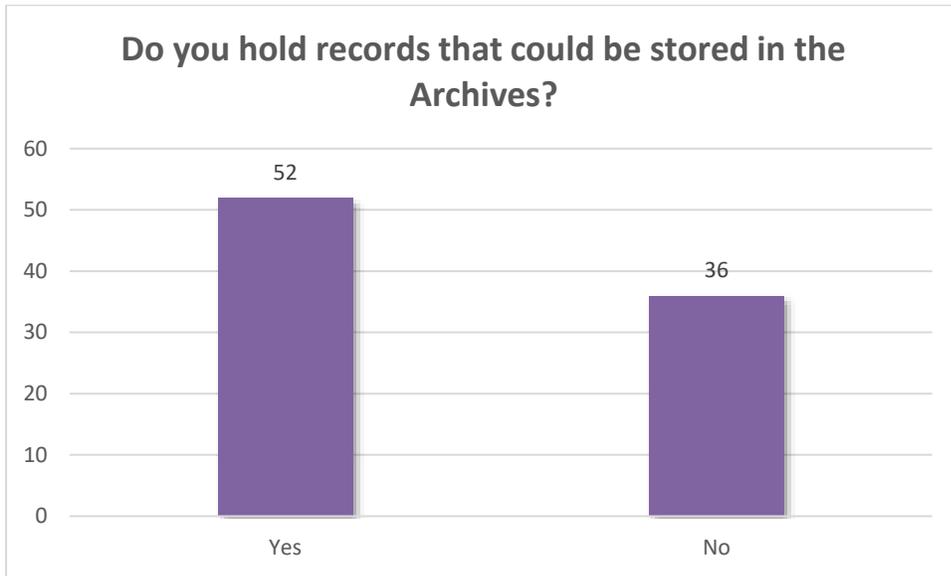


This question was asked to encourage Communities of Faith to make ongoing use of their Living Faith Stories. This question was generated by Faith Stories and Community Covenants.

Under the new Regional Structure, instead of coming up with a Community Profile only when searching for a minister, CoF are to develop a Living Faith Story that describes their mission. The Faith Story is intended to be used and referred to regularly, and modified as necessary, so that it reflects the Mission of the Community and guides their work.

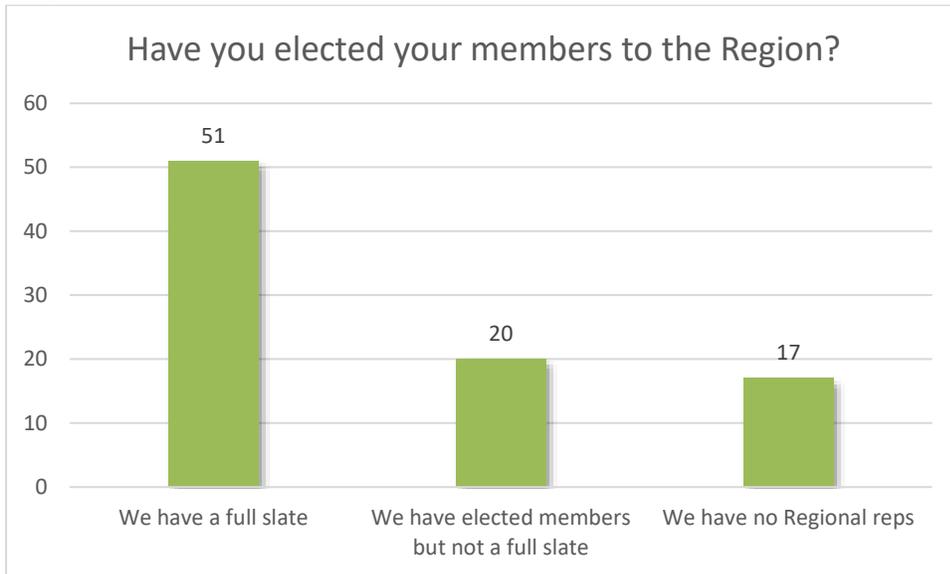
This question had a short answer format, where CoFs had an opportunity to answer in their own words. After receiving the responses, they were divided into the six broad categories above that covered the range of answers we received. We can't determine whether the responders have gone through the process of creating a Living Faith Story, since we didn't ask that question, but the responses show that most communities have an answer when they are asked how they are living their faith in the world.

Archives



These two questions were generated by the Archives Committee, and were asked to produce a picture of what materials are held by Communities of Faith that could be archived, and how can the Archives Committee assist CoFs in archiving their materials.

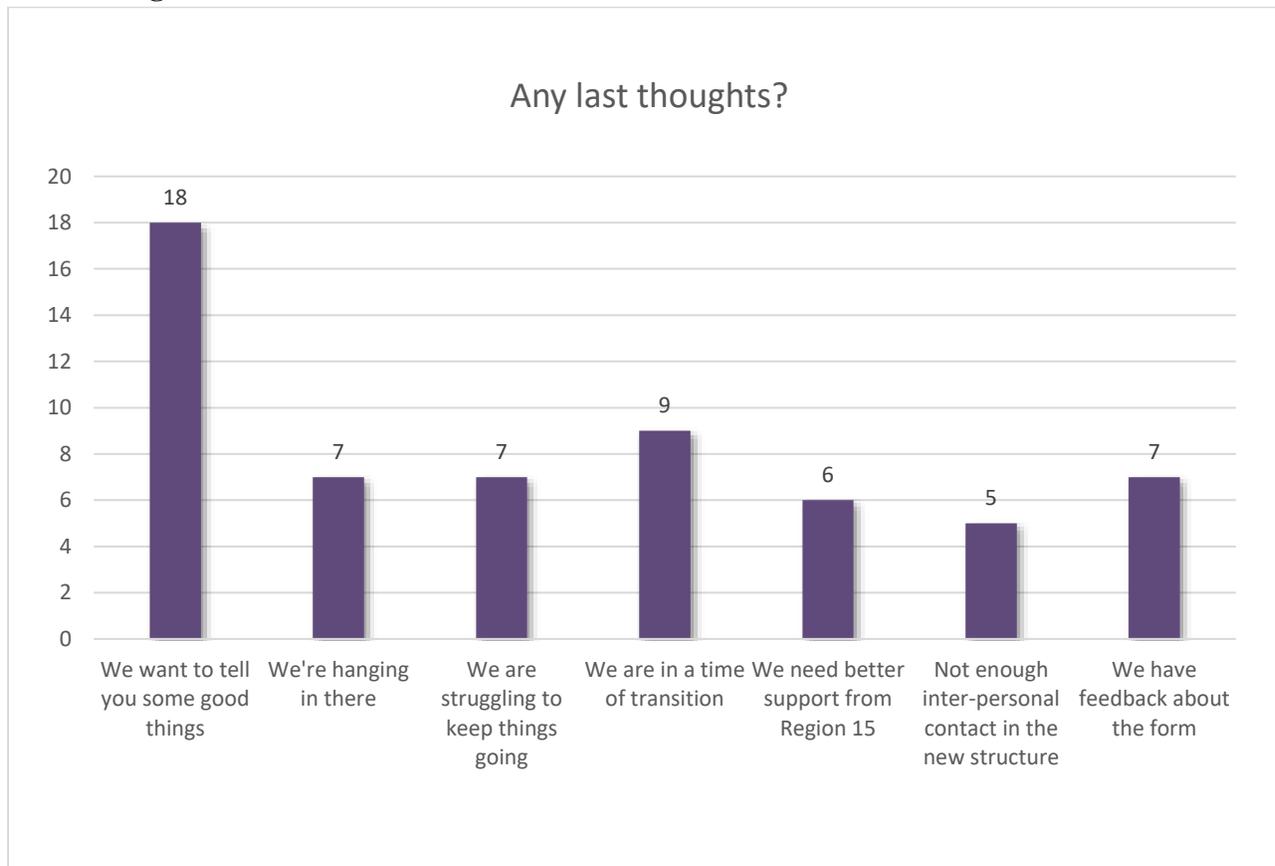
Regional Representation



This question was asked to determine if Communities of Faith have their full slate of Regional Representatives, and was generated by the Executive Minister.

We note that eight CoFs in the HRM, as well as a number of town churches, identified that they have some Regional Members, but not as many as allowed for by the Manual. For whatever reason, the Self-Assessment shows that larger CoFs in Region 15 are having trouble finding as many as four people willing to serve on the Region.

Last Thoughts



We provided some space at the end of the form to allow Communities of Faith to tell us things we didn't think to ask them. This was given in a longer answer format, and the responses are summed up here in seven categories.

Some CoFs used that space to give us more detailed answers to earlier questions, or to give us feedback about how the form worked for them, the lack of space to give a full answer was a common complaint!

A significant minority of responses asked for better connections with their Region. That was expressed both as requests to meet specific needs, and as laments for the connections we have lost now that we no longer have regular face to face meetings.

There were a small number of communities who told us that they have serious concerns about their futures. Those concerns will be passed on to the Future Directions Committee, who wants to help CoFs discern their future steps before a big crisis hits.

The largest single category was CoFs who wanted to tell us about the good things that were happening to them. There was an energy around these responses that might best be summed up

by one comment that said, “Perhaps we could talk more about our assets as communities and less about our stress of decline.” There are a lot of assets out there, and as tough as Covid has been on all of us, there has been a remarkable amount of resiliency in our faith communities.

Future Directions Committee

The Future Direction Committee has had ten meetings over the past year, all but one on Zoom. At each meeting we were joined by our staff support David Hewitt. We were also joined by Division of Ministry Resources Chair Anne Cameron.

Over the past year we have responded to the requests for assistance which are brought to us by Regional Minister David Hewitt. We have heard from a significant number of pastoral charges who find they are running out of resources and/or parishioners. The pandemic has been extra hard on communities of faith with already stretched resources.

Often the Region first hears from a community of faith when there is a request to reduce the hours for ministry personnel. Part-time ministry requests are on the rise. Over the past year our committee has participated in many discussions regarding how to help prepare communities of faith for the challenges of part-time ministry. The same goes for collaborative ministries (one ministry personnel serving two pastoral charges.) In order for it to be more than a temporary solution, part time and collaborative ministries need to have laity taking on more of the duties which in the past might have been the role of the ministry personnel.

We are currently working with Living Faith Story and Covenant Committee and the Pastoral Relations Committee to see how we can be proactive rather than reactive in supporting the faithful who are feeling their future is in question.

On the positive side, there are a number of communities of faith who are trying creative approaches as they plan for their future. Some of them are working through a process with EDGE, some have engaged Intentional Interim ministers to help course a new direction. Our committee often has a part to play in setting up a process to explore options and set them on a pathway to change.

Lastly, I hope with the easing of the pandemic we will be able to work with other Region Committees to organize workshops with groups of pastoral charges in a geographical area. From what we are hearing, this would be most welcome. And it would be extra timely in the areas in the province where numerous United Churches are experiencing an uncertain future at the same time.

It has been a year of many challenges for all of us and there will be more challenges ahead as together we seek to find new and faithful ways to navigate uncertain times. May God grant us the courage to be open to the Spirit’s leading.

Our members: Don Sellsted, Catherine MacDonald, Sean Handcock, Mary Thomson, Alison Etter (on maternity leave) and Kathleen Anderson will be joining us shortly. Jeff Chant resigned from our committee midyear. Many thanks to each committee member.

Peace of Christ,
Carol Smith, Chair for the Future Direction Committee

Licensing Committee

In spite of ongoing pandemic restrictions and concerns, the Region 15 Licensing Committee had an active year. We conducted sixteen Zoom interviews and six in-person interviews (these latter at the Tatamagouche Centre in September.)

The largest part of our work consists in interviewing those applying to be licensed or re-licensed as lay worship leaders. We also interview ministry students in pastoral charge appointments when the charges have asked for sacraments and marriage authorization on their behalf.

I want to acknowledge the contribution Licensed Lay Worship Leaders make to the life of the church in these difficult times. Also, thanks to the other members of the Committee for their care and commitment in doing this work.

Respectfully Submitted
John Moses, Chair

Pastoral Relations Committee

This committee met a total of 9 times since the last annual meeting to deal with the ongoing changes in Pastoral Relationships. There continues to be a strong trend in Ministry personnel being appointed to Pastoral Charges as many are parttime and fewer going the route of Call. The pandemic continues to have an extra level of stress in some Pastoral Charges, with a noticeable uptick in people seeking changes in Pastoral Relationships. Also, a noticeable number of clergy off on sick leave and short-term/long-term disability leave as well. A small but significant act that Pastoral Relations began carrying out this past year is simply to send a card including a Tim's gift card to these folks to relay our concerns for them and a "thinking of you" as you deal with these health setbacks. Also, cards for those clergy who have celebrated a recent birth.

Perhaps the greatest loss in our new governance structure is the ability to keep abreast of what is going on in our Pastoral Charges, both emotionally, spiritually and financially. This has been left to our Regional Ministers to decipher. Many thanks to our regional minister and liaisons who now have those conversations which at times can be difficult. Also received reports and updates this past year from Supervisors of Pastoral Charges, many of which have been under supervision, i.e., without active clergy for a number of years. All of these changes, calls, appointments, motions made at each of our meetings can be found on the e-announcements sent out from Regional 15 office, the first week of each month. Thanks to David Hewitt, our regional minister, for sending

these along. Members of this Committee are: Sean Boulger- Middleton, Sheila Stewart - Berwick, Jennifer Robarts-Advocate, and Rev. Tom Woods-Berwick.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Woods, Chair.

Retirees Support Committee

The Retirees Support Committee has continued to live within the bounds of Covid-19, which caused us to work strictly via email/phone conversation. We have hope that after Easter, 2022, we may be able to gather in various clusters.

Wanalda Parsons is our secretary. Wanalda sends sympathy cards, 'thinking of you' cards, Anniversary of the Church cards, etc., via email, and Canada Post to those of Regional Council 15, as the calls or emails come to her for action.

Our proposal, submitted to General Council Executive – 'Review of the Green Shield Benefits Plan with respect to Retirees Benefits,' didn't receive much action.

A letter was received from The Rev. Michael Blair, General Secretary General Council, dated February 8, 2021, stating that a review of the plans, provisions and prospective service providers is scheduled to be undertaken in 2022. The Executive decided not to initiate an earlier review in 2021 as proposed.

As Region 15, the Retirees Support Committee meets via email, and a general email is sent to the Retirees listed in our Data Base about every two months. Many people respond, grateful for the connection. Several share their concerns, frustrations with various issues. I respond, suggest, as I'm able, and seek help if the need arises. The challenges are many and varied for Retirees.

We celebrate those lives that are no longer with us; their Sprit gives us hope and guidance as we continue our ministry.

If you are not currently receiving our emails as a retired ministry personnel, secretary or custodial staff, please get in touch with one of our team members.

Our committee consists of Wanalda Parsons, Secretary, Glenn MacLean, David Hann, Linda Winton, (David MacLean when called upon,) and myself as Chair. We are a member of the Division of Ministry Resources.

The current team will stay in place for the time being, as we work at establishing where committee tasks are being duplicated within various committees of the Division of Ministry Resources, and

if there are changes to be made, we will keep everyone posted. I do attend, via Zoom, meetings of the Division during the year with reports as required.

K. Ruth Gamble, Chair, Retirees Support Committee – 902-660-2699
or via email at kathjohngamble@gmail.com