

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

“We believe in God who has created and is creating” (United Church Creed)

Your Pastoral Relations Committee continues to work on behalf of communities and ministry personnel within the boundaries of the Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Region. The ministry in which we are engaged is both challenging and rewarding. After the lifting of pandemic restrictions and feeling a bit more settled into our mandate, we believe this has been a year of progress.

It continues to be cost and administratively effective for the full committee to meet electronically via Zoom on the second Tuesday of the month. The Self-Assessment Working Group has been reactivated with the addition of Rev. Jane Doull, Rev. Greg Davis and Rev. Myles Vardy to the existing members who are Rev. Susan Estabrooks, Marlene MacLeod, Hugh Ellis and Rev. Kendall Harrison. This group is currently revising the Self-Assessment Check List which is intended replace the previous Triennial Presbytery Visit. The form was tested by four communities of faith before Covid restrictions were put in place and these communities will now receive follow up from the group. In addition, a plan is in place to execute a further slightly larger test in the Region this year. An introductory information workshop is also being offered at this year's annual meeting to introduce the process.

Another working group has been established to provide pastoral support, communication and connection to our pensioners and pension survivors. We are grateful that Rev. Dr. Beverly Daley, Rev. Jennifer Brown and Rev. Heather MacDougall have agreed to work with myself and Rev. Harrison on establishing this important connection on behalf of Pastoral Relations. Stay tuned for further information as this group is just being established. We are grateful to Barbara Prowse who continues to provide excellent support and guidance to our Licensed Lay Worship Leaders (LLWL) as our LLWL Co-Ordinator.

We have faithful committee members assuming leadership of certain projects, meetings and are grateful for their many gifts and contributions as we are of support from Regional Staff. We continue to make use of electronic votes on pressing issues when necessary between meetings.

Much of the work of our committee involves a core of trained liaisons who assist faith communities seeking assistance with Community of Faith Profile creation and search for ministry personnel. Additional Profile Training for liaisons will be held on April 15 and 22, 2023. We also have pastoral charge supervisors who guide communities during vacancies in their ministry personnel. Our deep appreciation goes out to all these individuals who step in to assist, often with limited notice.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS in 2022-23

The committee continues to maintain a comprehensive Excel spreadsheet to record significant pieces of pastoral relations data for each Pastoral Charge. This sheet includes communities, ministry personnel, call and appointment information, existence of a manse, liaison, supervisor, etc. An overview of activity in the region during the past year, provided later in the report, points

to both the need for and value of this documentation. Change is frequent and this allows the committee to view important information quickly and keep us current.

In the current year the committee has:

- Approved a FSLDW Covenanting Policy for communities of faith and ministry personnel.
- Approved an LLWL Policy and process for the Region which efficiently combines LLWL requirements as stated in the Manual, national LLWL Handbook and regional policy providing clear guidance for all parties.
- Established Partially Funded Ministry Considerations which provides a guide of ideas and discussions points for communities considering engaging part-time ministry personnel.
- Created a guide (in conjunction with the Property Committee) called Ending Well to establish the sequential steps required to formally end the life and ministry of a community of faith.
- Created the guide titled Disengaging from a Pastoral Relationship to set out the requirements for both the community of faith and the ministry personnel when the request to end a pastoral relationship is approved by Pastoral Relations

These documents are either currently or soon will be available on the regional website.

In addition, the committee created a Communication Guide to internally and more formally establish the circumstances under which the committee will communicate officially on regional letterhead with the parties involved.

As well as the ongoing work being conducted by the two formal working groups, the committee also has plans, in the coming year to address:

- A visioning process to assist communities of faith and ministry personnel in engaging in conversations, discussion and planning for the future while in a pastoral relationship
- A flow chart of sequential steps outlining the process flow for all parties in the creation of the Community of Faith Profile and subsequent search process.
- Developing a training process for sacramental elders for designated congregations who are without ministry personnel for extended periods
- Develop a boundaries training program/workshop for LLWL licensing.

In the past year the committee has financially supported the annual LLWL Gathering at Tatamagouche and the Workshop for Younger Clergy Leadership, as well as provided encouragement and moral support for the Regional Fresh Start Workshop and the Joint Initiative leading to the establishment of the Institute of Health, Joy and Excellence in Leadership.

CURRENT STATISTICS:

At the time of writing (April 1) the following numbers give a snapshot of ministry within the bounds of our region:

Pastoral Charges	111
Congregations	175

53 charges are served by full-time ministry.
 23 charges are served by part-time ministry.
 2 charges are cooperative ministries.
 15 charges are in shared ministry.
 5 charges are in regular Sunday Supply.

46 ministry personnel have been called.
 19 ministry personnel are under appointment.
 7 are students/candidates.
 1 is an admissionand.

12 liaisons are currently engaged with 16 communities.
 19 pastoral change supervisors are currently active.
 The region currently licenses 31 Licensed Lay Worship Leaders.

Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters currently has 16 open part-time and full-time ministry positions.

During the year the committee has approved 4 calls, 15 appointments, reviewed and approved 6 Community of Faith profiles and agreed to the closure of 3 communities of faith.

LISTING FOR PULPIT SUPPLY:

A listing of those ministry personnel and LLWLs available for pulpit supply is posted on the regional website.

PANDEMIC RECOVERY:

This has been another transitional year. Faith communities and ministry personnel continue to face challenges in various aspects of their ministries. The pressures of constantly evolving ministry in the post restriction environment impact our faith community leadership, church finances, connectedness of all worshippers and general attendance.

REGIONAL MINISTER AND COMMITTEE

Our committee wishes to express our thanks to the Regional Minister, Rev. Kendall Harrison. This individual's agenda is always full as are his email and telephone message boxes. As we have acknowledged so very often, Kendall's work is so essential, and never done! Our thanks for his gifts and the passion he displays for the ministry he shares with us.

This ends my second year as chair of this very busy, engaged and dedicated group. I remain in awe of our secretary Marlene MacLeod and her administrative skills. Marlene continues to make us all look good! I also wish to express my thanks to the other members of the committee: Rev. Aaron Billard, Rev. Kelly Burke, Rev. Greg Davis, Rev. Kate Jones, Rev. Heather MacDougall, and Barbara Prowse. They bring wisdom, dedication, experience and humour to our work. Heather will be leaving the committee following the annual meeting and we are grateful for her dedication to the region and her passion and commitment to ministry. I personally will miss her gift for editorial review and her insights into pastoral ministry. To her we extend our thanks and blessing and greatly appreciate her willingness to continue her regional work with our pensioner working group.

We live in challenging times, as have those who have gone before us. And yet we endure. The world is evolving and with it so is the church. Society embraces technology and communication as never before in history. Information..... good and bad, true and false..... travels at lightning speed. Separation of church and state seems to be an idea of the past. We are reminded of Christ's teaching of rendering unto Caesar and God separately. In the face of declining cross-denominational membership and church attendance there remains a great societal hunger for spiritual fulfillment. In the face of all of this exists a great opportunity for the church to become its best self. To speak to oppression and for truth and justice, to seek reconciliation, to offer forgiveness, to feed the hungry and cloth the poor, to offer light to darkness, to love.....to follow Christ and become his disciples. The challenge for all of us is to have the courage and the desire to see ourselves in new ways, to vision boldly, unencumbered by what is past. May we possess the grace, faith and desire to truly become what God intended each of us to be! God is always with us.....all the time. Thanks be to God!

Blessings and peace,
Hugh Ellis
Chair
FSLDW Pastoral Relations Committee