

EXECUTIVE MINISTER'S REPORT BERMUDA-NOVA SCOTIA REGIONAL COUNCIL

Reflecting on the Year

Rooted in Faith - Growing in Leadership. This year's theme is based on our third pillar in our strategic plan. Leadership: Develop curious, faithful, brave leaders. A leadership rooted always in a deep faith. It is through the stories from our region, we'll discover how faith inspires leadership, builds community, and fosters love. The annual reports from our divisions and committees, our Incorporated Ministries, and our other partners' reports are part of the story of our faith and leadership. The work of our staff and the work and witness of our ministry personnel and our congregations are another part of the story of our rootedness and our growth as leaders of faith.

Each of the pillars of our strategic plan is a guide for the work we do in the regional council. Last year we focused on Discipleship and we were very pleased to have Rev. Dr. Michael Blair with us as our theme speaker. He certainly helped to animate the call of discipleship for us as a people of faith and as people of The United Church of Canada.

As a reminder of the regional council's strategic plan, please see the website for the full document. The overview of the three pillars is as follows:

Pillar 1: Discipleship

Promote the importance of discipleship as core to the strengthening, vitality, and sustainability of Christian community.

Pillar 2: Mission

Engage communities of faith in defining their part in God's mission.

Pillar 3: Leadership

Develop curious, faithful, brave leaders.

Through the Regional Council Executive's discussion of the pillars, we have identified five priorities for our focus over the next five years:

Priorities

- Building trust and connection between regional council and communities of faith
- Building youth networks
- Building a more comprehensive communication strategy
- Supporting ministry personnel and lay leaders
- Supporting communities of faith in renewal of their call to discipleship

We have many resources that we have identified to help with this work. As staff resource, each staff position has a specific role in the region and is there to support our ministries.

Each of the divisions and committees also have a specific role in the support and nurture of our ministries. Each are very active and are held together by the members of the region who give of

themselves as a witness to their faith and as a commitment to live together in covenant with each other. Thank you so very much for your continued work, it is noticed and appreciated.

What We Are About:

We continued to have conversations about viability, cooperative and shared ministries. We have been looking at how to support communities of faith in ending well with dignity when they have determined that they are at the end of their life cycle. We are also encouraging communities of faith to be brave and to look outside the box; to try something new and not be afraid of failure.

As part of the region's work, we continue to explore the initiative for the Institute of Health, Joy and Excellence of our ministry personnel. While this initiative has taken a while to get off the ground, the work continues to evolve. The priorities have been determined and we are currently at the stage of meeting with potential partners who we feel have something unique to offer to the Institute and gain information from other places that have developed similar programming. We hope to launch the first initiative of the Institute in the fall of this year. Please watch out for more information and the launch.

The staff, Division and Committees of the regions are very aware of the stresses pastoral charges are facing and the responsibilities that fall on lay leaders and their ministry personnel. Please know that there are many resources out there to help support your journey. Please reach out to the staff or one of our committees to help support you in managing these challenges.

The work coming out of our regional council meeting last year through the proposals process has been ongoing.

The General Council made the decision to take no action on the proposal re: Congregational Designated Ministry, therefore as your Executive Minister, I gathered the Regional Ministers from each of the three regions, to determine "adequate support and oversight". That policy was recently approved at all three Regional Executives in our UCCEast.

The proposal for the establishment of a temporary part time position for a Cluster Animator has been ongoing. The proposal gave the region direction to developing a job description, finding grant money and hiring a person to carry out this work. While we are still awaiting word on a possible grant, the finance committee has also included the position in the budget. With the approval of the budget, we can move forward with the position and if we are fortunate enough to get some grant money that will assist with the budget.

Remit 1: Establishing an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization has passed. The results of this remit vote were:

The National Indigenous Council, and the 16 voting Regional Councils: **Yes: 17 No: 0** Pastoral Charges: **Yes: 1482 No: 93**

As is the case with all Category 3 Remits, if a remit has been approved by a majority of all the regional councils, the General Council must decide to enact it. The decision on enacting the remit will take place at the Annual Meeting of General Council, on October 19, 2024. When the remit has been enacted, the change will be included in the next edition of The Manual.

Educational Webinars/Events

The divisions, committees and staff have made a commitment to provide monthly learning events for our region. This year we have had workshops on Discipleship, and four webinars on Intergenerational worship, as well as training for liaisons. There will be more educational events named for fall 2024 and winter 2025. We encourage you to take in these webinars as a way to help us all in our ministry and leadership. If you have an idea for a webinar or workshop please be in touch and we will work towards getting the idea to the appropriate committee for an offering to the region.

Things of interest from General Council

Centennial Celebrations

The denomination's Centennial commemoration will be launched on June 9, 2024, at Metropolitan United Church in downtown Toronto, and livestreamed across the country. Plans are underway for a commemoration service in Atlantic Canada and then the final commemoration at the 45 General Council in Calgary 2025.

General Council Office is moving to 300 Bloor Street West

The lease for 300 Bloor Street was signed in November. This Bloor Street United Church location will include office and archive space for The United Church of Canada, Anglican Church of Canada and The Presbyterian Church in Canada, as well as a condominium development.

General Council 45

The 45th General Council will be held at the Telus Centre in Calgary, AB, on August 7th -12th, 2025. The theme will be *Visions and Dreams*, based on Acts 2:17: "*I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young shall see visions, and your elders shall dream dreams.*" The installation of the new Moderator will be at Knox United Church in Calgary on the last day of the General Council.

Sabbatical

This year I was fortunate to have sabbatical time. My sabbatical began with my taking a beginner's French course with the University of Waterloo. At the end of my sabbatical, I began my second course in a certificate program in change management from the University of Manitoba. In the middle of my sabbatical, I spent time listening and learning from an expert in inclusion. All of these pieces have been a blessing and have added to my continued development. My deepest appreciation to the region, divisions, committees, and staff for their support in making this happen. A special thank you to the Regional Ministers, David, Kendall and Heather who each took turns as Acting Executive Minister, and to Jennifer Taylor for maintaining emails and work flow during my sabbatical time.

Evaluation of the Regional Council

As the commissions for the regional councils were developing the Vision, Mission and Core Values and its governance structure, it was agreed that we would follow the General Council pattern and evaluate the regional council structure after the first five years. We are at the five-year mark and we will be embarking on an evaluation. More information will be shared at the annual meeting about the process and timelines.

Thank you to our Members:

The vibrancy of our communities of faith and our region is realized through the interconnected actions we take to support one another. It is because of you that our congregations have been supported and cared for and have begun to recover from the effects of the pandemic. None of this work is done by one person; it takes all of us. Your discipleship has helped to weave God's love through our region and connect us as a community. May we continue to live in this covenantal relationship.

Staff Updates

This year, we were sad to say good-bye to Shari Kaster from the Sackville Office. Shari has taken a new position with the Town of Sackville and continues to be on a short-term contract with us to assist with the Annual Meeting season. We wish Shari well in her new adventure and thank her for her time with us and her continued support. The search process for this position will begin in June. We welcomed Sharon Ballantyne as General Council staff deployed to the regions as Growth Animator. Sharon is part of a team deployed across the church to support communities of faith with renewal and to assist in the development of new communities of faith as part of The United Church's strategic plan focus on growth and support. We are very glad to have Sharon as part of our staff team.

All of our staff have worked hard over this past year to support our communities of faith, our committees, our ministry personnel, and our laity. I take this opportunity to thank each one of them for their continuous support, faithfulness, and professionalism. There is never an ask that is too big or a task that is too small for our staff. If you have an opportunity, please take the time to show your appreciation.

Rev. Faith March-MacCuish
Executive Minister