

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
BERMUDA-NOVA SCOTIA REGIONAL COUNCIL
REGIONAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE
June 20, 2025 at 9:30am via video conference

RC1

ATTENDANCE

Attendance

April Hart, Angela MacLean, Faith March-MacCuish, Donald Morrison, Ann Piper, Janet Sollows, Mary Taylor, Donna Tourneur.

REGRETS

Derek Elsworth, Carol Smith.

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER

Welcome

Mary Taylor, the newly installed President, welcomed the Executive to the meeting. Special welcome was extended to Donnie Morrison, the new President-Elect for the region. The President offered devotions based on Isaiah 43:18-19, and opened the meeting with prayer.

Opening Prayer

CHECK-IN

Check-In

The members of the Executive took time to check-in with each other, and lift up any concerns or celebrations in their lives.

QUORUM AND CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCIL

Quorum
Constitution of
the Council

The President, Mary Taylor, noted that a quorum was present and constituted the council in the name of Jesus Christ, the head of the church, and by the authority of Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council, for all the business that shall properly come before it.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE LAND

Acknowledging
the Land

Mary Taylor, President, acknowledged the land on which we gather, live, work and worship, with respect for all peoples of this land as we live out the apology, and move towards becoming the community that God calls us to be together in peace and friendship.

AGENDA

Agenda

The President noted that the agenda was circulated in advance of the meeting. It was agreed that the agenda be accepted, as circulated.

MINUTES

Minutes

MOTION: (Donna Tourneur/Ann Piper)

That the minutes of the March 13, 2025 meeting of the Executive be adopted as presented.

CARRIED

MOTION: (Janet Sollows/Angela MacLean)

That the minutes of the May 9, 2025 meeting of the Executive be adopted as presented.

CARRIED

It was noted for the minutes that the following motion was approved by an email vote, which was declared on April 10, 2025:

MOTION: (April Hart/Donnie Morrison)

That Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council agrees with the proposal Development of a Post-Gaza Theology, and forwards it to General Council.

CARRIED

Business Arising**BUSINESS ARISING**Evaluation of
RC Structure**Evaluation of Regional Council Structure**

The Executive Minister, Faith March-MacCuish, reported that the consultant presented the findings of the report at the annual meeting of the region. The full report is expected to be received at the end of the month. Once received, this report will be shared with the Executive for further discussion and next steps.

Pastoral Letter**Pastoral Letter and Template**

The Executive Minister reported that this letter was prepared in October. The Executive Minister sent this draft letter to General Council for review and feedback, and then returned it to Justice, Mission and Outreach for updates. The revised letter was received in March; however, several new developments have taken place since this letter and template were drafted, as this matter is ever-changing. The letter will be referred back to the committee for final revision and approval to distribute. A letter received by the United Church Women and the General Council was also offered for consideration.

RC Logo**Regional Council Logo**

Banners are being produced from each region for display at General Council 45. The Executive Minister shared the logos designed for approval.

MOTION: (Donna Tournour/Donnie Morrison)

That the logo presented be adopted as the logo for Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council.

CARRIEDStairs Memorial
UC Investigation**Stairs Memorial United Church Investigation** - File#2025-0206-01

The Executive Minister update the Executive on the work resulting from this investigation. Several pieces are being worked on with the Regional Minister and the Pastoral Charge. The Executive Minister also reported that the motions regarding the respondent are now in effect.

File#2025-0206-01

Correspondence**CORRESPONDENCE**Seeds of Hope

1. Thank You – Letter received from Helene Burns to thank the region for the letters of condolence received.
2. Dalhousie Campus Ministry – email received from Rev. Betsy Hogan, on behalf of the Dalhousie Campus Ministry Committee.

MOTION: (Janet Sollows/Ann Piper)

That the Dalhousie Campus Ministry Committee be disbanded, with thanks; and that Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council receive and hold any remaining funds under jurisdiction of the Justice, Mission, and Outreach Committee, for future development of campus ministry in the two Maritime Regions, until December 31, 2026; after which time, if these funds are not being used for this purpose, the funds associated with United Church grants be returned to the granting bodies, and remaining funds be redirected to other work of the Justice, Mission, and Outreach Committee.

CARRIED

It was noted that the region will still support the “informal” pieces of the campus ministry that are still ongoing, such as Monday night supper.

Reports**REPORTS**President**PRESIDENT**

Mary Taylor, President, reported that this meeting is for action items only.

EXECUTIVE MINISTER

Executive
Minister

The Executive Minister, Faith March-MacCuish, reported that there will be an important item coming from the Property Committee after their meeting next week. The Executive Minister provided some background information on this matter.

Tatamagouche Centre

The Executive Minister shared the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), developed between The United Church of Canada and the Women of First Light. The MOU details the intent to the transfer of the Tatamagouche Centre to the Women of First Light, and includes the significance of the transfer, the guiding principles for this work, the scope of the transition, roles and responsibilities, and objectives of the MOU.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION – Appendix A

Finance and
Administration

April Hart, chair, presented the report of the division, included in the appendix.

Funds Held Policy

Funds Held
Policy

Several changes to the policy were brought forward, to establish maximum and minimum amounts on various fund balances.

MOTION: (April Hart/Angela MacLean)

That Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council accepts the changes to the Funds Held Policy, as presented.

CARRIED

Brunswick Street United Church

Brunswick
Street UC

The chair reported that a meeting between the Financial Accountability and Investments Committee and Brunswick Street United Church has taken place to determine terms of the trust. Ownership of the building will be placed in a trust and managed by United Property Resource Corporation (UPRC). Final plans will be made in consultation with Brunswick Street.

MOTION: (April Hart/Donna Tourneur)

That Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council Executive accepts the terms of the Trust holding the financial resources of Brunswick Street United Church (Halifax), as presented.

CARRIED

BREAK

Break

MINISTRY RESOURCES – Appendix B

Ministry
Resources

Janet Sollows, chair, presented the report of the division, included in the appendix. The chair highlighted the Part-Time Ministry discussion paper. It was agreed that this matter will be brought to the September meeting of the Executive for further discussion and discernment.

MOTION: (Janet Sollows/Donna Tourneur)

That Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council Executive approves the name change for Emmanuel United Church in Kingsport from Cornwallis Pastoral Charge to Kingsport: Emmanuel Pastoral Charge.

CARRIED

MOTION: (Janet Sollows/Ann Piper)

That the Bermuda Nova Scotia Regional Council Executive approves the amalgamation of Torbrook Mines United Church and Kingston United Church, effective December 31, 2024. The name of the congregation will continue as Kingston United Church.

CARRIED

MOTION: (Janet Sollows/Donna Tournear)

That Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council Executive approves the proposal of Interim Ministry (IM) training support up to \$3000 (three thousand). The proposal would offer up to \$3000 (three thousand) in bursary support to qualified candidates that would assist with costs associated with training and certification in the IM program. The Region, through Pastoral Relations, would provide up to 5 (five), \$100 (one hundred), initial individual memberships with the IM training program per year. The Region, through Pastoral Relations, would provide up to 5 (five) module bursaries per year. The modules (there are 3 in total) cost \$500 (five hundred) each. The bursaries will be paid once a year on a first come basis.

CARRIED

It was noted that this proposal would be funded from within the committee budget.

MOTION: (Janet Sollows/Donna Tournear)

That Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council Executive approves the Annual Report Review proposal as presented.

CARRIEDRegional
Services and
Support**REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT** – Appendix C

Donnie Morrison presented the report on behalf of the division, included in the appendix.

Nominations**NOMINATIONS**

Angela MacLean, chair, reported that work continues to fill vacancies in the regional council structure, however there were no action items to present.

Staff Support**STAFF SUPPORT**

In the absence of the staff support committee representative, there was no report.

United Church
Women**UNITED CHURCH WOMEN**

Ann Piper presented the report of the United Church Women (UCW). It was noted that the group are struggling with the cost of printing the newsletter to keep membership connected. The Executive recommended that the UCW put in a proposal for support to the Financial Accountability and Investments Committee.

MOTION: (Angela MacLean/Donnie Morrison)

That the reports of the region be accepted as presented.

CARRIEDNew
Business**NEW BUSINESS**Meeting Dates**MEETING DATES 2025-26**

The Executive discussed meeting dates for the 2025-26 year. The following Executive meeting dates were agreed upon:

September 17-18, 2025 – in person at New Glasgow, NS
(beginning at 9:00am on September 17)
December 4, 2025 at 9:30am – via Zoom
March 19, 2026 at 9:30am – via Zoom
June 17, 2026 at 9:30am – via Zoom

Toward 2035**TOWARD 2035**

The Executive Minister continued the presentation on Toward 2035, as was introduced to the region at the annual meeting. The purpose of the report is to invite the wider church into conversation on who we wish to be in 2035; in order to interrupt the projected trajectory.

Significant data has been collected, which highlights a decline in membership and the numbers of pastoral charges in The United Church of Canada at three points in time; 1992, 2023, and projections for 2035. A PowerPoint presentation was shared with data detailing the decline in numbers of membership, identified givers, attendance at Sunday worship and Sunday School. The data goes on to project the number of pastoral charges with deficits, pastoral charges without ministry personnel, denominational finances, and possible vulnerabilities; as identified by three markers; participation, financial and ministry leadership. It is projected that by 2035 over 60% (sixty) pastoral charges will have high vulnerability with respect to financial sustainability and lack of ministry personnel, with over 80% (eighty) of pastoral charges having worship attendance of 50 (fifty) or less.

(Ann Piper left the meeting)

The Executive Minister noted that this report will be the topic for discussion at the fall meeting of the Executive, considering; How do we interrupt this trajectory? How do we attract new members to reflect the new diversity in Canada? How do we be resilient? How do we support congregations to ensure a United Church presence in communities throughout the region? How to we be strategic so that the United Church is not just a line in a history book?

The Regional Ministers will be provided with regional data, and will also be invited to participate in the discussions at the September meeting of the Executive.

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Executive will be in person on September 17-18, 2025, at New Glasgow, NS, beginning at 9:00am, on September 17, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment

Having no further business, the President declared the meeting adjourned.

BENEDICTION

Benediction

Mary Taylor, President, closed the meeting with prayer.

Mary Taylor
President

Faith March-MacCuish
Executive Minister

Appendix A**FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

Division of Finance & Administration

Report to Executive**20 June 2025**

Included Committees & Meetings: Archives (in need of a meeting)
 Finance, Accountability & Investment (meeting monthly)
 Incorporated Ministries (meeting as needed)
 Property (meeting monthly)

Date(s) of Recent Division Meetings: 26 February 2025

Summary of Committee Reports & Business to be Transferred to the Regional Executive Archives

- *Note: Met April 3, 2025*

Finance, Accountability & Investment

- The committee has been working on updating the terms of the Funds Held under our Financial Policy. MOTION by April Hart that the Executive accept the changes to the Policy, as attached.
- The committee met with members of Brunswick St. United Church (Halifax) to discuss terms for the trust in which the assets of the church will be held. Ownership of the building will be placed in trust and held by UPRC. The Property Committee is continuing to work on plans for ongoing management of the building as it pertains to repairs and maintenance. Final plans will be made in consultation with Brunswick Street Mission.

Invested funds are currently held by RBC Dominion. The committee did not see any reason to change the portfolio at this time. The account manager is Kevin Waller. A future meeting will need to be held with RBC Dominion, the signing officers for the Region and the Trustees representing Brunswick Street United to complete the transfer documents.

Based on these discussions the expected future annual fund income will be divided:

1. An annual base amount (TBD based on fund performance history) will be provided to Brunswick Street Mission for general operations. The base amount can be reviewed at set intervals (years) or have a rate of inflation (cost of living) subject to conversation with RBC Dominion on fund performance.
2. Reserve fund to support special requests from Brunswick Street Mission for specific projects.
3. Remaining income to support future growth of investment, building management and repairs of Brunswick Street Mission, and the Regional Council.

MOTION by April Hart that the Executive accept the terms of the Trust holding the financial resources of Brunswick St. United Church (Halifax), as presented.

- *Note: The siding on the Sackville Office building needs to be replaced. Several quotes have been received, with estimates of \$25-35,000 plus tax for the work. It was agreed that up to \$18,000 from the Sackville Office Maintenance Fund be approved to cover the Region's portion of the expense. Work is expected to commence in September.*

Incorporated Ministries

- *Note: Closing of St. Paul's Family Resource Institute*

Property

- *No update at this time.*

Date(s) of Upcoming Division Meetings: TBA

Respectfully submitted by

April Hart

Chair, Division of Finance and Administration

Appendix B

MINISTRY RESOURCES

Divisional Reports to Regional Council Executive
Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council

Division Name: Ministry Resources

Committee Names within the Division

Future Directions
Retiree Support
Pastoral Relations
Faith Story & Community Covenant
Licensing

Date of Divisional Meeting: June 5, 2025

Report of the decisions and discussion items before the Division:

The quarterly financial statement is discussed at every meeting. We also discussed the preliminary governance review report given at the online Annual Meeting by Jenny Stephens.

Dates of Committee Meetings: (since last Executive meeting)

Future Directions – March 26, April 30, May 28
Retiree Support – no meetings
Pastoral Relations – April 11, May 16
Faith Story & Community Covenant – May 8
Licensing – March 20

Reports of the decisions and discussion items from the Committees:

Future Directions:

Tamsin Robson made a presentation about the “Untied Church” at the Feb. meeting. There will be further discussion of that presentation at future meetings. Ongoing work continues with St. Paul’s Church in Spryfield and the Spryfield Family Resource Institute about their future. Stairs Memorial, St. James, and Grace United in Dartmouth have engaged a facilitator to help them ascertain if there are possibilities for collaboration between the three churches. The Committee received communication from Wally Chivers of the Property Committee that St. James is proposing to sell their hall building, and plan to use the funds from that sale to renovate the existing building. Check-ins with projects at Avon, Stairs Memorial and Crossroads Pastoral Charges have taken place. Catherine MacDonald has stepped down as Chair of Future Directions. Presently, there is no one named take her place.

Retiree Support:

Ruth Gamble has assumed chairing this committee again. She plans to work at getting retirees together in various areas throughout Nova Scotia. She will reach out to the Cluster Animator to try and coordinate gatherings in areas.

Pastoral Relations:

The Pastoral Relations Committee welcomes Rev. Karen McNeil to the committee following the Regional Annual Meeting. The committee addressed a proposal presented by the Regional Minister. The Region has a shortage of qualified Interim Ministers (IM). The proposal would offer up to \$3000.00 in bursary support to qualified candidates that would assist with costs associated with training and certification in the IM program. The Region, through Pastoral Relations, would provide up to 5, one-hundred-dollar, initial individual memberships with the IM training program per year. The Region, through Pastoral Relations, would provide up to 5 module bursaries per year. The modules (there are 3 in total) cost \$500 each. The bursaries will be paid once a year on a first come basis. The funding totals (\$3000/year) are within the budget of Pastoral Relations. Sean Boulger is continuing as chair of the Pastoral Relations Committee.

Appendix B – continued**MINISTRY RESOURCES** - continued**Faith Story & Community Covenant:**

The Faith Story and Community Covenant Committee has focused largely on future planning and exploring how they can more effectively support communities of faith in the development and living out of Living Faith Stories and how they can more efficiently support the ongoing relationship between communities of faith and the Regional Council. This conversation has led us to two main conclusions:

1. They believe their regular offering of Living Faith Stories workshops has run its course. They began these workshops when the concept of a Living Faith Story was new and unfamiliar and as a way to bring communities of faith together into conversation and relationship. Many have completed a Pastoral Relations process which require them to engage the Living Faith Story and among those who haven't, the interest in workshops has declined. They believe the workshop format has value, but will move to offering it only when requested. The Faith Story & Community Covenant Committee has written a one-page document with highlights from their workshop and suggestions about how a congregation might engage the process. This document also includes a sample living faith story. It has been posted to the Regional Council website and also shared with all pastoral charges in the Region via email and the weekly announcements for the Region.
2. The Faith Story & Community Covenant Committee made the decision not to send out a Self-Assessment survey this year, even though it has been 2 years since their last survey. There are many evaluations taking place both within the Region and across the denomination right now and it was felt that adding one more survey to the mix would not yield intended results. Instead, they are exploring how to offer more targeted support to communities of faith who may need it. To this end, they would like to recommend that representatives from all Divisions or Regional committees gather for a combined meeting in the fall of 2025 to review a selection of annual reports from communities of faith. Having everyone in the same room would allow representatives of different committees to collaborate and brainstorm how best to support a particular congregation and share the work between different committees. A checklist has been drafted which could be used at this gathering, as well as a sample letter that could be sent out. Both are included in this report for review by the Executive. Depending upon the success of this event in the fall, they would anticipate doing a similar event at least once a year, with the goal of reviewing and providing targeted feedback to every community of faith in the Region, over the course of a three-year period. Each committee participating would bear the cost of sending a member(s). In addition to this work, the Faith Stories and Community Covenant Committee will be exploring the possibility of putting together a Self-Assessment survey to send out to congregations in 2026. Daniel MacDonald has stepped down as chair of the Faith Story & Community Covenant Committee. No replacement has been named.

Licensing:

The Licensing Committee has conducted a few Zoom interviews for LLWLs and met on June 14 at Woodlawn United for an in-person meeting and interviews. They hope to hold interviews in the fall as well in conjunction with the LLWL Gathering at the Tatamagouche Centre. This is scheduled for Nov 6-8th. The committee is working on their yearly check-in scripts and questions for LLWLs between their license renewal. The committee is giving some thought to offering a workshop at the Annual Meeting of Bermuda - Nova Scotia Regional Council to share information about the LLWL program and process. North Highlands PC is getting a DLM on July 1, therefore the Sacramental Elders will no longer be required. The committee is still considering some way to recognize LLWLs at the Annual Meeting. Joan Griffin is continuing on a chair of this committee.

Concerns of the Division and the Committees:

Part-time Ministry – The Future Directions Committee has developed a discussion paper on part-time ministry which the Division of Ministry Resources would like the Executive to consider.

(See attached)

Future Directions - Can we develop a perspective on property sales of declining churches? Should the conversion of capital assets into cash be allowed to continue, and should churches be allowed to spend those resources if they are on an inevitable decline towards closure?

Appendix B – continued

MINISTRY RESOURCES - continued

Recommended Motions from the Division to the Executive:

1. Moved that the Bermuda Nova Scotia Regional Council Executive approve the name change for Emmanuel United Church in Kingsport from "Cornwallis Pastoral Charge" to "Kingsport: Emmanuel Pastoral Charge.
2. Moved that the Bermuda Nova Scotia Regional Council Executive approve the amalgamation of Torbrook Mines United Church and Kingston United Church, effective December 31, 2024. The name of the congregation will continue as Kingston United Church.
3. Moved that the Regional Council Executive approve the proposal of Interim Ministry (IM) training support up to \$3000. The proposal would offer up to \$3000.00 in bursary support to qualified candidates that would assist with costs associated with training and certification in the IM program. The Region, through Pastoral Relations, would provide up to 5, one-hundred-dollar, initial individual memberships with the IM training program per year. The Region, through Pastoral Relations, would provide up to 5 module bursaries per year. The modules (there are 3 in total) cost \$500 each. The bursaries will be paid once a year on a first come basis.
4. Moved that the Regional Council Executive approve the Annual Report Review proposal (attached).

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Sollows
Chair, Division of Ministry Resources

**Appendix: Part Time Ministry Discussion Paper
Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council**

Currently in BNS Region, more than half of the pastoral charges are served by some form of part-time ministry. 30 pastoral charges are in collaborative partnerships, sharing a full-time minister. Another 39 pastoral charges have solo part-time ministers. 21 of those charges are served by retired ministry personnel, and 7 by Candidates. The remaining 11 part-time charges are served by "regular" ministry personnel, most of whom are held to a particular geographic reason by family circumstances.

As a strategy in response to declining resourcefulness, a shift to part-time ministry is a sensible way to restore balance to the budget. However, it can be observed that the decline that led to part-time ministry has not been halted by the decision, it has only been slowed. Decline continues, and is leading to escalating church closures, disbandings and amalgamations.

In communities where there is not already a retired minister ready to take the position, part-time ministry vacancies can take a long time to fill. In the present real estate market, it is difficult to imagine anyone considering a move in order to buy a home and cover expenses on a partial salary. There are currently more ministers on the "available" list than there are vacant positions across the country, and yet positions remain vacant, sometimes for years. We are not experiencing a minister shortage, but we are experiencing a mobility shortage. Ministers cannot afford to relocate to accept a new position, and most certainly cannot do so for partial salary.

General Council has begun statistical analysis comparing the years 1992 and 2023, and projecting into the future. A quick comparison of the same years for BNS produces some sobering results:

- 14 pastoral charges have disappeared
- 139 congregations have disbanded or amalgamated
- Financially supporting households have gone from over 24,000 to less than 10,000
- Resident United Church membership has cut in half to 22,219, while the population of the province has increased by over 130,000 people.

It seems likely that if we continued to engage the same strategies we have been using over the last few decades, we are likely to see the same results. Congregations in decline will continue to decline, congregations in danger of closing will close. Something needs to change.

Appendix B – continued**MINISTRY RESOURCES** - continued

Bermuda-Nova Scotia Region will require the following with respect to every part-time ministry position that comes forward for approval to Search, and for every part-time ministry appointment that comes forward for renewal:

1. A preliminary conversation about the potential for collaboration with another pastoral charge in order to jointly support a full-time ministry position.
2. A position description that expects worship leadership in proportion with the size of the position. For example, a half-time position will expect worship leadership every second Sunday. A collaborative ministry with equal partners will expect worship to alternate between the partners. This provides ministry time for focus on ministry beyond worship and consideration of initiatives to engage with previously unserved populations.
3. A position description that includes a strong emphasis on community engagement and the development of strategies for renewal and revitalization of the congregation.
4. A governance model sized appropriately for the congregation, with all key roles filled, a functioning M&P Committee, and task groups created for the development of lay leadership in pastoral care, worship, and community engagement. (It is difficult for a congregation to innovate if their governance structure no longer functions effectively. Sometimes it is too big for the size of the congregation, with too many committees and not enough people to fill all of the necessary positions. A church with a part-time minister requires strong lay leadership in order to provide full-spectrum ministry. Strong and lasting lay leadership requires support, training and mentorship on an ongoing basis in order to ensure capability, while providing space and time for rest and renewal.)
5. A Living Faith Story that demonstrates commitment to deep exploration of the spiritual, theological and scriptural basis for the life and function of a community of faith.

For any pastoral charge that cannot meet these expectations there will be an acknowledgement that their time in ministry is coming to an end. A timeline will be established for ending well, and a plan implemented for how the congregation will celebrate its time of ministry, and bequeath its remaining resources to the continuing ministry of the United Church in the Region.

Appendix: Annual Report Review Proposal
from the Division of Ministry Resources

Instead of conducting a Self-Assessment this year, it was suggested at the March 12 meeting of the Faith Story and Community Covenant Committee that we review the annual reports of communities of faith and provide feedback. David Hewitt and Janet Sollows volunteered to create a list of criteria for reviewing the annual reports.

David and Janet met on March 17 and discussed the possibility of an in-person event to be held in the fall. All committees and groups within the Region would be invited to send one or two representatives (at their own committee's expense) to the session to look for particular information of interest to their committee. Any feedback for communities of faith would be communicated back to them.

It was felt that the following committees could look for the following information.
Financial Accountability & Investment – income, expenses, total of investments
Faith Story & Community Covenant – evidence of Living Faith Story and how the congregation is living their story
Future Directions – Can the community of faith fill all their governance positions?
Children, Youth & Young Adults - Activities for child, youth and young adults

Other things to look for:

- Evidence of functioning Ministry & Personnel Committee and Trustees
- Regional Council representative and report
- Activities in the community
- Statistics for baptisms, confirmations, transfers, funerals, weddings, etc.

This process would allow Divisions/Committees/groups to find information to inform their work. The gathering of information would also allow individual committees to collect best practices from a variety of communities of faith and share them within the Region.

Appendix B – continued

MINISTRY RESOURCES - continued

Sample letter to committees:

On date at place, the Faith Story and Community Covenant Committee (or Division of Ministry Resources) will be conducting a triennial review of (a third) of our Region's Pastoral Charges. This will be done by reviewing their annual reports. If there is information that your Division/ Committee/Group would like to collect, we invite you to send 1-2 representatives to this review. Throughout the day, annual reports will be reviewed through the lens of your group and then a general conversation about the health of the congregation will take place. At the conclusion of the day, information will be collected on each Pastoral Charge and communicated back to them with recognition of good practices and suggestions for improvement. Please notify _____ with information that you would like to collect and the names of representatives from your committee that will be attending.

Appendix C

REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT

Divisional Reports to Regional Council Executive Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council

Division Name: Regional Services and Support

June 20, 2025

Committee Names within the Division

Faith Formation and Leadership Development (FFLD)
Communications
Children, Youth and Young Adult (CYaYA)
Stewardship
Justice, Mission & Outreach (JMO)
Annual Meeting Planning (AMPC)
Affirm Ministries

Date of Divisional Meetings: A Zoom meeting was held on May 21, 2025.

Report of the decisions and discussion items before the Division:

Webinars

FFLD is organized a spring Worship Leadership webinar, a repeat of the Worship 101. It was well-attended with about 15 people attending. FFLD will plan a fall webinar (or webinar series).

JMO has a Land Acknowledgement webinar on its agenda.

Stewardship wants to host a webinar book study on "Growing a Generous Church".

A webinar or series of webinars on how to host webinars might be useful.

In-Person Division Committee Meeting

The Division Committee will meet in the fall in person. This will include only the chairs of each division committee, secretary, chair and staff resource person. It will be scheduled around the Executive Minister's schedule to be in the Maritimes.

Financial Report

The Division Committee discussed the financial report as at March 31 that was provided by Jenn Whittemore.

Strategic Plan

At the February 10 meeting, we invited Growth Animator Sharon Ballantyne to our meeting to talk about how we can better live into the mission objectives of the region's strategic plan.

As reported last time, Sharon suggested that we should turn the strategic plan lens back on each committee, asking what do we need to re-energize ourselves and what does living into the strategic plan mean in each of our committees. She suggested that we look at the actions under each objective and ask is there a piece there that we need to pick up or let go? Also, celebrate the work we are doing.

For the May 21 meeting, the Chair broke down the strategic plan and bullet-pointed for each action where division committees are at achieving the actions and where committees might adjust their response to the strategic plan. Committee chairs will consider what the Division Chair has done and make further suggestions at our September in-person meeting.

Communications

From Consultant Jenny Stephens we heard that the regional council needs to have in place a Communications plan. The Division Committee discussed how other committees can take up pieces of the Communications Committee role.

People are feeling that connection is missing. Hopefully Robyn Brown-Hewitt's work around clusters will help alleviate this.

Dates of Committee Meetings: *(since last Executive meeting)*

- Faith Formation and Leadership Development (*meet monthly*): March 27 and April 24. Next meeting June 26.
- Communications ∅

Appendix C – continued**REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT** - continued

- Children, Youth and Young Adult: Didn't meet in the winter. Working by email while the chair is on parental leave.
- Stewardship: March 14, March 25, May 30 & 31.
- Justice, Mission & Outreach: March 18, May 29. Next meeting Oct. 23 & 24 in-person.
- Annual Meeting Planning meets monthly from Sept. to June (except for December)
- Affirm meets monthly on the second Tuesday: Apr 8. Next meeting in September.

Ø = no meeting dates reported

Reports of the decisions and discussion items from the Committees:**Faith Formation and Leadership Development**

Chair, Mike Thompson reported.

The work of this committee suffers due to lack of members. Committee members have approached a prospective member, who hasn't committed yet. The committee is losing one long-time member, Sharon Lohnes.

Worship 101, webinars designed to help lay people who lead worship in their congregations, has once again been successful. Recorded sessions are available. Participants were reminded that recording is taking place. Each presentation ran for about 1 hour with an additional 30 minutes for general discussion and questions. Registration for the series was \$50.

The five sessions, their leaders and topics were:

- The Person in the Pulpit – April 28th – Rev. Robyn Brown-Hewitt
- Liturgy – May 5th – Rev. Andrew O'Neill
- Music as Worship – May 12th – Mr. Kevin Parks
- Bringing a Word – May 26th – Rev. Dr. Ross Bartlett
- Prayers of the People Workshop – June 2nd – Rev. Janice MacLean

Word is that General Council is interested in a program like FFLD's Worship 101. They might jump off from what BNS FFLD is doing.

FFLD is planning a fall webinar on the topic of leading public prayer.

Communications

This committee has yet to be re-created.

Children, Youth and Young Adult

Catherine Stuart (Staff Support) reported as the chair is off on parental leave.

Although the committee hasn't met as such, lots of work continues to be done by email.

At the time of our Division meeting on May 21, 110 youth participants were expected at Youth@Region, from grades 6 to 12. There were 44 leaders enlisted. There was in-person training in Sackville, NB on May 10 and a Zoom training on May 26 for those who couldn't make it on May 10. Pine Hill Divinity Hall paid for 160 Y@R T-shirts.

45 camp leaders have met for training.

After accreditation visits were done last year, it was discovered that a lot of camps were struggling with faith formation and what to do with it, so a lot of camp training has focused on what faith formation looks like at camp:

- What does it mean to find meaning at camp?
- To talk about different values at camp?
- What does it mean to say we're a United Church camp but welcome people of all faiths and no faith?

The Pacific Mountain Region has created a camp curriculum called "Alive". It includes Bible stories, science experiments, music, etc. The updated document is on their website. It is a 300-page pdf and provided free. It can be used at Vacation Bible School or Sunday School. Catherine will be using it at Berwick Vacation School in order to test it.

Five youths will be going to General Council this year.

A version of Rendez Vous will be held next August in St. Catherine's ON. It won't be called Rendez Vous – a new name will be used.

Appendix C – continued**REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT** - continued**Stewardship**

Chair, Wanalda Parsons reported.

On March 14, the Chair led an introductory telephone call to the two other members of the Stewardship Committee. Only one member wishes to remain, that is Margaret Dobson.

On March 25 a Zoom call was held with Roger Janes. Possible ways to move forward were discussed. The committee used the Regional Council Annual Meeting to make that community aware that Stewardship is active and looking to assist communities of faith as needed. A poster board was prepared showing the programs available. Pamphlets on available programs, Mission and Service pens, business cards with Stewardship websites and a notebook to leave the names of communities of faith interested in further information were available. Quality Street chocolates were also available for those who visited the display.

The committee wants people to know the Stewardship Committee is active and available to provide assistance.

The chair handed out many business cards and talked to people about stewardship.

The Stewardship team met at the AGM to plan for the next few months.

Contact will be made with communities of faith for a visit to their site at their convenience to discuss Stewardship. The committee is looking at one visit a month to different areas of the province, except in winter months.

The committee is planning a monthly brief news note to be sent to regional representatives or to chairs of Stewardship Committees of each church with a stewardship message.

The Chair met with the Stewardship Committee at First United in Truro on June 6. The discussion was about fundraising.

The committee is planning a cluster meeting in the Pictou area about legacy giving.

The committee also wants to host a webinar book study on "Growing a Generous Church". A webinar or series of webinars on how to host webinars might be useful.

Justice, Mission & Outreach *(Joint Committee with FSLDW)***Bermuda-Nova Scotia**

Sandra Tomsons, Chair

Kathryn Anderson, DM (2026)

Linda Scherzinger, (2026) Just Peace

Sheila van Schaik, (2026) Eco-Justice

Fundy, St. Lawrence, Dawning Waters

Kathy Bigsby, Chair (2026)

Barbara Cairns, (2027, 2nd)

Audrey Lounder (2028)

Keith MacPherson (2026, 2nd)

Jennifer Broomhead (2025)

Christine MacLeod (2027)

Natasha Pearen (2027)

Mary Kennedy-Fulton (2028)

Jane Doull (2028)

Corresponding members:

Karen Llewellyn, BIG

Norm Lavery, Mental Health

Minister for JMOC

Shepherd Munikwa

The Chair, Sandra Tomsons reported.

The Chair reported that working groups are active. An in-person meeting was held on May 29 in Sackville, NB.

Appendix C – continued**REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT** - continued

Division Chair notes from the May 29 meeting:

- JMO had a presentation table at the regional council annual meeting.
- Marie Wilson “North of Nowhere” book tour, co-sponsored by JMO, is nearing an end. JMO shared a meal with Marie on May 29.
- The Chaplaincy Working Group reported. The Chaplaincy Board at Dalhousie is disbanding. At Dal, churches in the campus area are coming together to provide support for students. Is providing ministries in the scope of JMO? The issue was brought to FSLDW Executive, but not BNS.
- Membership: The co-chairs met with the chairs of the two regional nominating committees involved, to make a case for JMO to allow members designated by working groups as their official representatives to remain on JMO past their term dates. The nominating committees felt the need to keep committees refreshed and to follow the same rules as other committees was important. For Bermuda-Nova Scotia, the three remaining members plus the co-chair have been re-appointed for one year. That leaves four vacancies in that region’s JMO committee. The JMO secretary position is vacant.
- A webinar on Land Acknowledgements is being considered.
- There was a suggestion from FSLDW to consider a bilingual JMO letterhead. During the discussion, there were suggestions for adding a land acknowledgement and indigenous languages. Members will work on options to consider.
- Working Group reports and communication to communities of faith were discussed again.
- The JMO website needs to be updated. Seyi, in the Sackville office, has the skills to assist with this.
- FSLDW member Audrey Louder is editor of “Spark”, a newsletter for sharing stories and communicating with communities of faith. She invited submissions from working groups.
- It was suggested was that JMO request a youth liaison for information-sharing. A youth representative might be invited to the Fall JMO Gathering. This could be done through Catherine Stewart.
- Kathryn shared via email that uranium mining is in the news again in Nova Scotia. The Eco-justice group will monitor this issue.
- The Just Peace working group shared information that came out just before this meeting: Last Friday the Moderator, along with the heads of four other denominations and several church-related organizations, forwarded a joint letter to the new Prime Minister with respect to the genocide in Gaza and the collapse of the International rules-based order.
- In a release from the United Church, the denomination has agreed to join the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.
- The Moderator has written to the Prime Minister recently on the genocide in Gaza from her perspective as a mother. She has asked the UCW to support the denomination’s work for a just peace for Palestinians.
- There was concern about the loss of workshops at regional council meetings this year. The regional councils are in the process of organizing cluster gatherings, some of which have already taken place. Working groups will explore using these clusters for their workshops.
- JMO has been asked by David Hewitt to host a webinar on Land Acknowledgements.

Annual Meeting Planning

Chair, Jane McDonald reported that the online business meeting section of the Annual Meeting went well.

Division Chair note: Following that, we all experienced that the in-person commemoration weekend in Sackville held with FSLDW Region was a roaring success!

Affirm Ministries

Chair, Shelley Pick reported.

Appendix C – continued**REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT** - continued

The Affirm Committee continues to work on its social media page.

The committee had a presentation table at the Annual General Meeting of the regional councils.

The committee has hosted some good seminars and would like to figure out how to access recordings that could be provided to pastoral charges. The committee would like to have a focus on a webinar library.

The committee is involved in equity support and met with FSLDW to talk about how to provide equity support at the AGM.

The committee is feeling a disconnect with communities of faith. Communities of Faith that are already affirming are supported by Affirm United. The committee is trying to figure out its role. The committee's social media page is a way to be public, show support and give resources.

Concerns of the Division and the Committees:

We continue to be concerned about the low membership of the FFLD and JMO Committees.

Recommended Motions from the Division to the Executive

None to report.

The next meeting of the Division of Regional Services and Support will be scheduled when the September Executive meeting date is known.

-Donnie Morrison
Chair
Division of Regional Services and Support