

Attendance**ATTENDANCE**

Anne Cameron, Derek Elsworth, April Hart, Faith March-MacCuish, Donald Morrison, Ann Piper, Janet Sollows, Mary Taylor, Donna Tourneur.

Regrets**REGRETS**

Carol Smith.

Welcome**WELCOME**

Mary Taylor, President, welcomed Executive members to the meeting.

Quorum**QUORUM AND 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.

MOTION: (Donna Tourneur/Janet Sollows)

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

CARRIED

Opening Devotions**OPENING DEVOTIONS**

The President shared a Lenten scripture reading from Psalm 133; bringing the good news that unity and relationships bring God's blessing and strength. The President invited the members gathered to check-in with one another. The President opened the meeting with prayer.

(Derek Elsworth joined the meeting)

Minutes**MINUTES**

MOTION: (Donna Tourneur/Donnie Morrison)

That the minutes of the December 4, 2026 meeting of the Executive be adopted as presented.

CARRIED

Business Arising**BUSINESS ARISING**Stairs Memorial
File#2025-0206-01**Stairs Memorial Investigation – File#2025-0206-01**

The Executive Minister, Faith March-MacCuish, provided an update on the items coming from this investigation. Most recently, a mediator worked with all parties to develop a back to work plan. The region's work on this file is now concluded.

Tatamagouche Centre**Tatamagouche Centre**

The Executive Minister provided an update on the work towards rematriation. The Tatamagouche Board, Women of First Light and the Regional Council continue to be committed to rematriation. The Women of First Light are discerning their future vision for the property.

The Tatamagouche Board has paused operations while they work through next steps.

Structural Change Consulting Sessions

The Executive Minister noted that two sessions have taken place, with the third session is taking place on March 20, 2026. After the fourth session, a proposal will be prepared for presentation to the Regional Council. The Executive members noted their satisfaction with the process.

Structural
Change
Consulting
Sessions

Bridgewater United Church Review – File #2025-1204-01

The Executive Minister noted that the reviewer is in place, and is currently conducting interviews with members of the congregation. Once the final report is prepared, recommendations will come to the Executive for decision making.

Bridgewater UC
Review
File #2025-
1204-01

Behavioural Covenant

The Executive Minister circulated a draft document for consideration. The document is currently used by General Council and committees, and it is hoped that a similar document will be developed for use by the Regional Council Executive. The Executive Minister has offered to edit this draft piece. Conversation on this topic will be held until the consulting sessions have concluded; should there be other items to include.

Behavioural
Covenant

BREAK

Break

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence

1. Just Peace Working Group – email to request time on the agenda to introduce the Executive to the Apartheid Free Communities program. This presentation will take place under reports.
2. St. Matthew's United Church – email from Margaret Machum regarding proposed amalgamation. This discussion will take place under reports.

Just Peace
Working Group

St. Matthew's
UC

REPORTS

Reports

PRESIDENT

President

The President provided an update on her work on behalf of the region. There have been many meetings of late regarding work of the Executive, consulting sessions, the Towards 2035 initiative, and annual meeting presentations. The President also represented the region at a covenanting service, funeral, and led a worship service at First United Church, Truro. The President thanked the Executive for their continued support.

EXECUTIVE MINISTER

Executive
Minister

The Executive Minister shared her appreciation for the work of the region regarding the restructuring of the governance structure; including the work with the consultant. The Executive Minister is preparing a communication to the region on this work.

The Executive Minister shared that it is invigorating to explore the work on the Toward 2025 initiative. Although some of the work is difficult, the Executive Minister expressed gratitude for the support of the Executive, volunteers and members of the region, and for the walk of discipleship for the future of the church.

NOMINATIONS

Nominations

In the absence of a chair, the Executive Minister brought forward the following motion. It was noted that the committee is vital to the governance of the region, and that further support of the committee is needed. Donna Tourneur, Past President, and Anne Cameron, Division chair, offered themselves for this work.

MOTION: (April Hart/Derek Elsworth)

That Donna Tourneur be named as chair, Nominations, and Anne Cameron, be named as member, Nominations.

CARRIED

MOTION: (Donnie Morrison/Anne Cameron)

That Andriel Pitter be named as member, Justice Mission and Outreach Committee.

CARRIEDTri-Regional Staff Support**TRI-REGIONAL STAFF SUPPORT COMMITTEE**

Derek Elsworth, representative on the Tri-Regional Staff Support Committee, reported that the committee will meet later today. He will have a report for the next meeting of the Executive.

It was noted that General Council has re-defined the stewardship and growth animator roles in the regions. Sharon Ballantyne will remain in Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council in the new role as Growth Animator and Stewardship, and a new person will be hired for the new role, serving both First Dawn Eastern Edge and Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Councils.

United Church Women**UNITED CHURCH WOMEN** (UCW)

Ann Piper, UCW representative, offered that the district annual meeting is taking place this weekend in Sackville, NB, followed by the Maritime UCW Annual Meeting, scheduled for April 24-26, 2026 in Fredericton, NB. The theme for the annual meeting is *Creator, Creating and I*. At the meeting on Saturday, Ann Piper will be installed as President.

Break**BREAK**

(Donnie Morrison left the meeting)

Finance and Administration**FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

April Hart, chair, presented the report of the Division.

Audited Financial Statements**Audited Financial Statements**

The chair presented the audited financial statements for 2025. It was noted that the auditor's opinion states that the statements "present fairly the financial position of the regional council". The chair offered that this is the most important statement in relation to audited statements.

The chair highlighted several areas of note: in general, the investments of the region are stable, with a small gain year over year. It was noted that there is an increase in staff salaries, due to cost-of-living and step increases. Also noted was the change in cash, as the region has moved some cash to Guaranteed Investment Certificates (GIC's).

MOTION: (April Hart/Ann Piper)

That the 2025 audited financial statements be approved as presented.

CARRIEDBudget 2027**Budget 2027**

April Hart, chair, reviewed the 2025 actual expenditures, and presented the budget for 2027. The chair noted that there is a change in rental income due to the rental space that is now used by Mount Allison University Archives. The chair also highlighted the increase in the budget for the annual meeting, given the increased costs of hosting meetings, and the increase in financial support for youth forum, due to the increased number of participants.

The Property Committee and Division of Ministry Resources have also asked for increased budgets for 2027, due to the increased volume of work, adding to mileage and meeting expenses. It was noted that the committee used a conservative estimate for investment income, as it is not something that can be determined in advance.

In summary, a deficit budget is presented, which, if realized, will be covered by investment income and other income from previous years. Given we have funds, it makes sense to present a budget to honour all of the work the region wishes to accomplish.

MOTION: (April Hart/Anne Cameron)

That the 2027 draft budget be accepted as presented and brought to the Regional Council Annual Meeting.

CARRIED

MINISTRY RESOURCES – Appendix A

Ministry
Resources

Janet Sollows, chair, presented the report of the Division, included in the appendix. The chair noted that as there is no budget line item for United Fresh Start, the Division of Ministry Resources have requested a budget increase for this for this group.

Wentworth United Church

Wentworth UC

MOTION: (Janet Sollows/Derek Elsworth)

That Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council approves the disbanding of Wentworth United Church, effect December 31, 2025.

CARRIED

Fort Massey – St. Andrew’s – St. Matthew’s United Churches

Fort Massey-
St. Andrew’s-
St. Matthew’s
UC

The Division has been working with the amalgamation team for the Fort Massey, St. Andrew’s, and St. Matthew’s United Churches, Halifax over a period of six months. The Division chair and Executive Minister provided some background on the amalgamation process and the work of the team. The correspondence sent to the Executive from members of the St. Matthew’s congregation was discussed, and while there was sympathy for those who are finding the decision to be part of an amalgamation difficult. The Executive is confident that the proper process has been followed, that a properly called congregational meeting was conducted, and there was a clear majority that voted in favour of the amalgamation.

MOTION: (Janet Sollows/April Hart)

That Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council approves the amalgamation of Fort Massey, St. Andrew’s and St. Matthew’s United Churches, Halifax, effective July 1, 2026.

TABLED

MOTION: (Derek Elsworth/Janet Sollows)

That the amalgamation motion be tabled until after the Justice, Mission, and Outreach presentation.

CARRIED

REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT – Appendix B

Regional
Services and
Support

Justice, Mission and Outreach

MOTION: (Anne Cameron/Donna Tourneur)

Justice,
Mission and
Outreach

That Linda Scherzinger be a corresponding member to the March 19, 2026 meeting of the Executive.

CARRIED

Apartheid-Free Pledge

Apartheid-Free
Pledge

Linda Scherzinger was welcomed to the Executive meeting. Linda is a member of the Just Peace Working Group of the Justice, Mission and Outreach Committee. Linda shared a PowerPoint presentation, to educate the Executive on the Apartheid-Free Pledge. A definition of what is apartheid and a video on human rights were shared; illustrating how Palestinians are affected by Israel’s apartheid.

The presentation concluded with answers to the question, why we would consider taking this pledge; including that this is a faith and moral issue and not a political one. On behalf of the Executive, the President thanked Linda for her presentation and information.

(Linda Scherzinger left the meeting)

Ministry
Resources

MINISTRY RESOURCES - continued

Fort Massey – St. Andrew’s – St. Matthew’s United Churches

MOTION: (Anne Cameron/April Hart)

That the amalgamation motion be lifted from the table.

CARRIED

MOTION: (Janet Sollows/April Hart)

That Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council approves the amalgamation of Fort Massey, St. Andrew’s and St. Matthew’s United Churches, Halifax, effective July 1, 2026.

CARRIED

The chair also noted other areas of concern in the report of the Division, including that there is a need for care and support of ministry personnel in the region who are on medical leave and in need of time for their own healing, health and well-being.

Regional
Services and
Support

REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT - continued

Justice, Mission and Outreach – continued

Justice, Mission
and Outreach

The Executive Minister shared a response from the General Council regarding the Apartheid-Free Community Pledge. The Executive discussed the presentation and felt that this matter was best brought to the full council. It was agreed that the Executive thank the Just Peace Working Group for the presentation, and recommend that it be brought as a proposal to the annual meeting.

Communications

Communications

Anne Cameron, chair, highlighted proposed revisions to the Communications Committee duties. It was agreed that this revision and process be brought to the consulting sessions, in concert with other revisions for the Governance document.

MOTION: (Anne Cameron/Derek Elsworth)

That the reports of the region be accepted a presented.

CARRIED

New Business

NEW BUSINESS

Cluster
Animator

CLUSTER ANIMATOR – Appendix C

The Executive Minister presented the interim report from Robyn Brown-Hewitt, Cluster Animator, included in the appendix. The report highlights a summary of the work of the position to March 1, 2026. The appointment of the Cluster Animator position began in October, 2024, and will end in May, 2026. The report outlines both ongoing and new or renewed clusters, and work that has taken place with regional committees and staff. The report also outlines what observations have come from the cluster work, and some suggestions for moving forward. A final report will be prepared at the conclusion of the term. The interim report concluded with thanks for all who have offered support for this work.

Adjournment

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the President declared that the meeting adjourn.

DRAFT

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Executive will take place on May 31, 2026 at 12:30am, after the closing of the annual meeting.

BENEDICTION

Benediction

The President, Mary Taylor, closed the meeting with prayer.

Mary Taylor
President

Faith March-MacCuish
Executive Minister

Appendix A**MINISTRY RESOURCES****Division of Ministry Resources****Report to Regional Council Executive,
Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council****March 19, 2026****Division Name:** Ministry Resources**Committee Names within the Division**

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

Date of Divisional Meeting: February 26, 2026**Dates of Committee Meetings:** (since last Executive meeting)

Future Directions – No chairperson. This work is being done by the Division.

Retiree Support – None.

Pastoral Relations – December 12, January 16, February 20

Faith Story & Community Covenant – No chairperson. This work is being done by the Division.

Licensing – February 19

Reports of the decisions and discussion items from the Committees:

Future Directions: The division received information regarding the disbandment of the Wentworth Pastoral Charge. The property committee informed us that all property matters have been settled. The church property has been transformed into two rental properties, and the building is under the management of UCRC. A question was raised regarding where the revenue from the property goes when there is no remaining congregation in a situation such as this.

David Hewitt provided an update regarding the proposed amalgamation of St. Andrew's, St. Matthew's, and Fort Massey United Churches. Following our previous meeting, a letter was sent to the amalgamation team requesting further clarification on several points, and a request for financial statements from each church to be included. The clarifying points requested and financial statements from all three churches were received. It was noted that all staff positions (including ministry personnel) will end as of June 30th, 2026, and all current staff will have the ability to apply for the newly created positions.

At our previous meeting, the division received correspondence from a concerned member of one of the churches regarding concern for the process of amalgamation. A response was sent on behalf of the Division. In response to the Division's reply, the Division chair received additional correspondence from the original correspondent, and a few others. After discussion and review of all documentation, the division felt that the amalgamation process properly followed the policies and procedures of The United Church of Canada regarding the process of amalgamation.

Retiree Support: Another announcement will be placed in the Weekly Regional announcements promoting the existence and work of the Retiree Support Committee. A general email was sent to everyone prior to Christmas, and several responded. There was a discussion about responding to the deaths of ministry personnel or their spouses. The chair of the committee was not sure what the expected protocol was for this. The chair has been placing sympathy notes on the funeral home web pages or sending notes in the mail for those who have passed since November. The committee is hoping for some cluster work in the Spring.

Pastoral Relations: The Region's Pastoral Relations Committee continues with its monthly meetings. Two of its longest serving members (both laity) have graciously offered to serve another term, thus, relieving pressure from the Nominations Committee. Recently, Pastoral Relations has been working with the facilitators of the United Fresh Start program in an effort to make the program more palatable to communities of faith and their ministry personnel.

Appendix A - continued**MINISTRY RESOURCES** - continued

Pastoral Relations has agreed to pay for a module from United Fresh Start for congregations starting a new pastoral relationship or appointment. The Pastoral Relations Committee continues to be diligent in their work and strives to ensure effective and timely communication between themselves and other offices within the wider church. They would encourage all congregations and ministry personnel to approach our Regional Minister (and committee) with any issues, questions and concerns relating to the ministry personnel relationship. Early intervention can hopefully avoid any future confusion and discomfort.

Faith Story & Community Covenant: No report. This committee is without a chairperson. It was noted that given the governance structure review, we should postpone the proposed annual report review. It was noted that the review of annual reports should be an assigned task within the revised structure. An idea was raised that annual report review may be conducted by a team, and perhaps we could call on the gifts of those with much experience, but may not be able to physically serve in other ways. They could be asked to offer review reports and offer reflections to pastoral charges.

Licensing: There was an L.L.W.L. gathering event this fall at the Tatamagouche Center. One member from the committee attended the entire event. The committee met for a meeting during this event and conducted 2 interviews. Unfortunately, there were only two participants from the BNS Region. There were 16 from FSLDW. Four interviews were conducted in total this fall, and all have received a license renewal. The committee is busy with interviews and inquiries. The committee has reviewed some of its policies and procedures to provide better clarity to all. The committee has clarified that "home community of faith" refers to the pastoral charge, and not a single worship point. A question was raised about the need for LLWLs to have a Vulnerable Sector Check if they are not permitted to provide pastoral care. It was determined that it is still within our 'Duty of Care' to ensure that safety and best practices are being followed. There are currently 3 new persons, that we are aware of, discerning entry into the Licensed Lay Worship Leader program. There are no renewals of licenses due for the coming year. It was also noted that there have been questions for those living close to the border about the possibility of doing services in another region. Given our policies and procedures, it is not possible to be licensed in two regions at a time. The committee has been seeking out at least two new members. The Nominations Committee has tried to find new members but have not been successful in doing so. At the rise of the Annual Meeting, Joan Griffin, Chair, will be resigning from the Licensing Committee. Committee members have been asked to consider taking on the position.

Concerns of the Division and the Committees:

1. Policy for Part-Time Ministry – This document was tabled at a previous Executive meeting. It was suggested that we may want to edit the suggested policy, as further information regarding Towards 2035 initiatives are revealed, to better reflect the strategic plan of the church.
2. United Fresh Start does not have its own budget line, or fall under the responsibility of a particular committee, but we feel it belongs within our Division as its work relates to many aspects of ministry resources. We have requested a budget for this group in the 2027 budget.
3. With a number of amalgamations happening in the past few years, reflection on how the Region could or should be involved in the work of amalgamation was raised. We may wish to offer some best practices or guidance for amalgamations in the future.
4. There is a need for our ministry personnel to find support, and to be able to respond to concerns as they arise. It was noted that ministry personnel should not feel guilty about needing to take leave to care for their health and well-being. It was also noted that there are currently a few ministry personnel on extended medical leave, and there are currently 2 formal complaint processes taking place.

Recommended Motions from the Division to the Executive:

Motion: Moved that Bermuda Nova Scotia Region approve the disbanding of Wentworth United Church, effective December 31, 2025.



Appendix A - continued

MINISTRY RESOURCES - continued

Motion: Moved that Bermuda Nova Scotia Region approve the amalgamation of Fort Massey, St. Andrew's and St. Matthew's United Churches, Halifax, effective July 1, 2026.

Janet Sollows
Chair,
Division of Ministry Resources

Appendix B

REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT

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

Division Name: Regional Services and Support March 19, 2026

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:

- The Division Committee and members of division committees met by Zoom on Jan. 29 from 7PM to 9PM for an information session with Faith March-MacCuish to discuss "Toward 2035" and the BNS structure evaluation.
- The Division Committee met for a regularly scheduled quarterly meeting on March 2, 2026 by Zoom.

Report of the decisions and discussion items before the Division:

Webinars

FFLD is planning a webinar for March 18. Sharon Ballantyne and Sharon Buttrey who is from the General Council Office will talk about Neighbourhood Profile reports that they provide on statistics and demographics. They will explain how to access the data for communities of faith and using the report to better understand our communities.

Affirm is planning a webinar presented by Ian Harrison on invisible disabilities, tentatively scheduled for March 25. Another possible webinar is "How to be more Equitable in our Faith Communities".

Fundy Saint Lawrence Dawning Waters region had a webinar in March on how to become an Affirming Ministry - getting started. It was led by Pix Butt and advertised in the BNS weekly announcements.

JMOC is planning a webinar on Land Acknowledgements.

Financial Report

The Division Committees submitted budget requests for 2027 on time.

Strategic Plan

Carried over: 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 next meeting. The Stewardship Chair has completed her comments and will forward them to the Division Chair. The other Chairs will refer to both and complete their comments.

Communications

The Division Chair has prepared the following proposed revision of the Communications Committee duties. We are unsure, because of its nature, about whether it should be brought to the Executive or go to the Division, since it is a change to the Governance handbook:

Communications and Clusters Committee – proposed revision

Duties:

- recommend on communications vision, policies and matters relating Region
- promote and cultivate the use of the most effective of technology (communications and audio/visual) for the meetings of the Region and in its communications with the Communities of Faith
- use all appropriate media outlets to inform members of The United Church of Canada and the general public of the policies, positions, events and stories of the Region
- encourage the Region, the Communities of Faith to use the publications and resources of the United Church, such as the Broadview, Gathering and official social media.
- collaborate with the Faith Formation and Leadership Development Committee to maintain a comprehensive list of United Church resources and United Church-aligned resources, on the Region's website, with an emphasis on worship and free resources.
- recommend on the most appropriate social media platforms to communicate and receive feedback on matters of interest and importance to the Region
- review existing UC policies and create necessary policies concerning communications
- recommend on the use and materials related to the Regional website
- advise on branding, format, messaging and content in print media
- encourage and assist each Committee within the Division in the use of clusters and networking to help in communications and sharing of information within their Region
- with the support of the Communications Staff person, maintain a clusters' contact list and direct and consistent communication with them

Appendix B - continued**REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT** - continued**Dates of Committee Meetings:** *(since last Executive meeting)*

- Faith Formation and Leadership Development *(meet monthly)*: Jan. 5, Feb. 2, March 2.
- Communications ∅
- Children, Youth and Young Adult: ∅ meets monthly
- Stewardship: ∅
- Justice, Mission & Outreach: Feb. 24. Next meetings April 14 by Zoom, Oct. 29-30 in-person.
- Annual Meeting Planning meets monthly from Sept. to June (except for December) Jan. 21, Feb. 12, March 18. Next meeting April 22.
- Affirm meets monthly: Jan 7, Feb. 4, Mar. 4. Next meeting April 1.

∅ = no meeting dates reported

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

FFLD engaged Janice MacLean, the host of Prayer Bench, to prepare a series of audio recordings to provide support to lay and ordered leaders who find themselves called upon to offer a prayer or lead a service. Janice MacLean has completed the series audio recordings and they are ready for distribution.

A webinar with Sharon Ballantyne and Sharon Buttery is planned, as discussed above. The committee is finding its feet again with 4 new members.

As of the BNS Annual Meeting, Chair, Michael Thompson will be resigning as chair, but remaining on the committee. Secretary, Susan Reid, will be leaving the committee as of the Annual meeting.

Communications

This committee has yet to be re-created. There is only one person remaining on the Nominations Committee presently. Suggested names should be brought to the Executive through the Division Chair.

Children, Youth and Young Adult

Submitted by Paige Fraser, Committee Chair

CYaYA Report to Division- March 2026

CYaYA continues to have productive monthly meetings focusing on leadership development, regional youth programming, and strengthening structures that support young people across the Region. See below our areas of focus this winter.

Youth Advisory Council Exploration

We engaged in a substantive conversation about the possibility of establishing a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) within our Region, informed by the experience of the Chinook Winds and Pacific Mountain Regions. Their model centres youth voice in governance, leadership development, and ministry decision-making.

Our committee is discerning how a similar structure might take shape in our context. Next steps include reviewing documentation, assessing regional readiness and exploring budget implications.

Youth @ Region (Y@R)

Planning for Y@R is well underway, with a full planning team in place. Budget pressures remain a concern due to rising venue costs, and we continue to monitor registration fees in light of potential regional funding support. Program development is progressing, including theme, branding, and a draft schedule.

Collective 2026

We are beginning early financial planning for participation in Collective 2026. Transportation (bus pilgrimage) costs remain the most significant expense. The committee has proactively earmarked \$2,000 from our current budget to subsidize youth registration and is exploring additional funding avenues to ensure accessibility, especially around travel.

Appendix B - continued**REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT** - continued

Collective 2026 is a spirit-filled national gathering for youth, young adults, and their leaders from across Canada. Hosted by The Presbyterian Church in Canada and The United Church of Canada, this groundbreaking ecumenical event is a space to grow in faith, dream boldly, and build authentic community. In 2024 it was well-received.

Camp and ORM

Camps will be represented on the ORM committee, and accreditation matters are being addressed where needed. We continue to support safe, accountable, and sustainable camping ministries.

Emerging Areas of Focus

- Exploring a regional workshop on supporting neurodivergent youth in faith communities, potentially in collaboration with other Atlantic Regions.
- Ongoing discernment regarding campus chaplaincy and young adult ministry.

Overall, our work remains centred on cultivating youth leadership, ensuring accessible regional programming, and strengthening collaborative ministry structures that meaningfully include young people in the life and governance of the church.

Stewardship

Wanalda Parsons, Chair

The Stewardship Chair gave a point-by-point explanation of her comments about the Strategic Plan (*mentioned above*)

Bermuda-Nova Scotia Region Stewardship Report, March 2, 2026

Informal Report

1. Certificate in Stewardship completed. Waiting for approval to attend graduation in May. Approval received from AST to use completed poster project for Certificate in Stewardship at May Annual meeting as Table Display for Stewardship.
2. Monthly Stewardship notices continue in Region Weekly Newsletter. Now that all Region Representatives will be joining the weekly Region Newsletter hoping more people will see and read the newsletter.
3. New communication notice sent to all Region Representatives re: Local Stewardship Committee on January 20, 2026. I have received four replies from local communities of faith and have replied.
4. On Feb 25, 2026 I received a list of 22 local communities of faith that responded to our Communications/Office Administrator! I now have a working base to focus on. Each individual response is in the process of being completed.
5. Encouraging the free programs on Stewardship as this ends June 2026.
6. With Spring weather plan to visit individual community of faith and display and talk stewardship.

Justice, Mission & Outreach (*Joint Committee with FSLDW*)

Submitted by Sandra Tomsons

Sandi Tomsons has resigned from the committee (her term has expired). Currently there is no BNS chair. There is room for 5 more members on the committee.

Bermuda-Nova Scotia

Chair Vacant; Kathryn Anderson, DM (2026); Linda Scherzinger, (2026) Just Peace; Sheila van Schaik, (2026) Eco-Justice

Fundy, St. Lawrence, Dawning Waters

Kathy Bigsby, Chair (2026); Audrey Louder (2028); Jennifer Broomhead (2025); Christine MacLeod (2027); Natasha Pearen (2027); Mary Kennedy-Fulton (2028); Jane Doull (2028)

Corresponding members:

Karen Llewellyn, GLI; Norm Laverty, Mental Health; Minister for JMOC, Shepherd Munikwa

Justice Mission and Outreach Committee Report**March 26, 2026**

JMOC met via Zoom on February 24, 2026 with guests Anne Cameron, Chair of Division of Regional Services and Support for BNS and Catherine Stuart, Regional Minister for Children, Youth and Young Adults.

Appendix B - continued**REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT** - continued

At the Fall Gathering a decision was made to invite Catherine Stuart to this meeting to help us understand how we could support the social justice activities of youth in our regions. We also wished to discuss the assignment to JMOC of the concerns raised by the loss of the Dalhousie University chaplaincy and share the work done by JMOC on this issue. Going forward, when Catherine becomes aware of youth social justice initiatives she will ask if groups are interested in collaborating with JMOC and let them know that we have some ability to support and amplify the work they are doing. Shepherd Munikwa will continue to connect with youth initiatives through Catherine.

There was strong endorsement from JMOC for the wider church embracing Youth and Young Adult Ministry as a priority and JMOC supports framing the need to address the lack of campus ministry in the context of "Towards 2035." There was agreement that campus ministry should be returned to Youth and Young Adult ministry, with thanks to JMOC members Natasha Pearen and Jen Broomhead for all their work on this. Going forward, JMOC will develop a proposal to the executives of each region asking that Youth and Young Adult Ministry be assigned a high priority in our regions including creating a task group to explore options for animating this priority, and (for BNS) that JMOC not be given responsibility for handling concerns related to loss of the Dal Chaplaincy.

JMOC has committed to oversight of Working Groups. Working groups will share their membership lists prior to the annual meetings. If they have terms of reference, they will also submit these.

Working Group updates**Global Justice**

Jubilee 2025 is winding up with further efforts to press the federal government on debt forgiveness for developing countries. Kairos Halifax is leading this locally and will be in Ottawa in late April to meet with members of parliament.

Breaking the Silence/Just Us Coffee: JMOC will request time at the regional meetings to share information this project.

Indigenous Rights and Relations

JMOC members Natasha Pearson and Mary Kennedy-Fulton are working on a webinar on Land Acknowledgements at the request of BNS.

Just Peace in Palestine and Israel

The Just Peace group requested and was granted 15 minutes at each of the upcoming regional executive meetings to present the case for signing the Apartheid-Free Pledge. Just Peace continues work with the Boycott, Divest and Sanction advocacy. Ecumenical accompaniers from the UCC stopped traveling to Palestine due to problems obtaining insurance, but this program will begin again soon.

Mental Health Working Group

JMOC is supporting a re-set for this working group and will be inviting interest from around the two regions to assist with redeveloping the working group.

Guaranteed Liveable Income

This working group has joined with Basic Income Nova Scotia to support a conference to be held at the Halifax Library on April 17th.

Respectfully submitted
Kathy Bigsby, FSLDW Chair

Annual Meeting Planning

Submitted by Jane McDonald, Committee Chair

Report to the Division of Regional Services and Support

The Committee meets monthly and we are blessed to have the following work together to bring the Annual Meeting to our representatives.

Connie McNamara, Alica Cox, April Hart, Shannon MacLean, Heather Manual, Mary-Beth Moriarity, James O'Connell, Fay Smith, Catherine Stuart, Mary Taylor, Donna Tourneur, and our staff Faith March-MacCuish and Jenn Whittemore.

We meet monthly from September until our annual meeting is held except for December. This year our Annual Meeting will be held at Acadia University from the 28th of May until the Celebration of Ministry on Sunday, May 31st. Registration will be in the afternoon on Thursday with the meeting starting directly after supper on the Thursday evening. The draft agenda is currently on the Bermuda-Nova Scotia website under Annual Meeting 2026.

Appendix B - continued**REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT** - continued

We are fortunate to have Rev. John Pentland return to visit with us this year. Rev. Pentland will be offering his thoughts on who we are and where do we want to be as we move into these next few years. We look forward to his wisdom. We will not be having our traditional set of workshops during this meeting we will be focusing on Rev. Pentland's works and the considerations of Towards 2035. Therefor on Saturday afternoon we will be split between these two workshop events so that everyone has time at both sessions. For those that wish to make presentations to the regional representatives, time will be made through a webinar prior to the in-person event.

As always, we will be having our pre-event webinars to understand the processes of the in-person meeting for new attendees, share proposals, review the financial statements and the 2027 budget and to hear from our candidates for President -elect.

We look forward to a dynamic Youth @ Region event. We had more youth participate last year than ever before since we again started meeting in person again. This is a joy to continue to see our youth numbers grow. We are fortunate to have some wonderful leaders working with our Youth and we can't be happier to be able to spend some time with then throughout the weekend.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the Annual meeting.
Respectfully submitted,

Jane McDonald
Chair of the Annual Meeting Planning Committee.

Affirm Ministries

No report. Chair vacant.

Concerns of the Division and the Committees:

We continue to be concerned about the low membership of the JMO Committee and the loss of two committee chairs.

Recommended Motions from the Division to the Executive

None.

Donnie Morrison, Outgoing Chair
Anne Cameron, Chair
Division of Regional Services and Support

Appendix C

CLUSTER ANIMATOR

Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council Executive Meeting, March 19, 2026
Cluster Animator – Interim Report
Rev. Robyn Brown-Hewitt

This report provides a brief summary of the Cluster Animator's work to March 1st. I was appointed Oct. 14/24 for 12 hours per week. The appointment will end May 31/26 at which time I will present a comprehensive final report and recommendations to the BNS Annual Meeting.

What I was asked to do:

The Cluster Animator is to work with communities of faith in the Region, including ministry personnel, regional representatives and additional lay participants, for the specific purpose of establishing basic local clusters. These small groups meet for mutual support and community-building on a consistent basis.

The main areas of the Animator's focus are:

- A. **Consultation and Engagement:**
 - Consult with designated regional representatives and ministry personnel to clarify local needs/interests, determine 'logical' geographic groups, and possibilities for ongoing sustainability.
 - Consult with existing groups and clusters to learn about their purpose, structure and sustainability.
 - Consult with BNS Regional staff and committees.
 - Consult with staff from other regions to learn about their best practices.
- B. **Planning and Development:**
 - Analyze information collected from consultations to create a plan for Cluster Animation.
 - Organize initial meetings and identify potential ongoing leadership.
- C. **Cluster Support:**
 - Attend initial meetings of clusters and support their ongoing development by providing information and resources.
 - Create an updated listing of clusters to be shared with the Region on its website.
 - Prepare reports and recommendations for best practices to support clusters.

What I've done to date:

1. **Ongoing Clusters:** I've met with the following groups which pre-date the presence of the Cluster Animator. In some cases, these groups began meeting before the 2019 restructuring. They have established patterns of meeting, significant levels of trust, and it was helpful to learn the secrets of their continuity as well as the challenges some are facing:
 - Hub (Truro area) - Ministry
 - Pictou County - Ministry
 - South Shore - Ministry
 - Annapolis Valley - Ministry
 - United Churches for Dartmouth – Ministry & Laity
2. **New or Renewed Clusters:** The following groups have been established or re-established. In a few cases, people reached out to me for assistance to initiate a gathering. In most cases I reached out to ministry personnel and lay Regional representatives with an invitation. My goal for meetings has been to have at least one person present from each community of faith within the given area. Except for two groups (which now have in-person dates set), all groups have enjoyed meeting in person at least once.
 - Administry – UCC BNS Church Administrators
 - Affirming Communities (HRM) – representatives from Affirming CoFs
 - Cape Breton East – Ministry & Laity
 - Cape Breton West Causeway – Ministry

Appendix C - continued**CLUSTER ANIMATOR** - continued

- Halifax Regional Municipality – Ministry
- Lunenburg–LaHave – Ministry & Laity
- North Nova – Ministry & Laity
- North West End (Halifax) – Ministry & Laity
- South West Nova – Ministry & Laity
- Valley – Ministry & Laity

Each initial cluster meeting consists of getting acquainted, explaining the purpose for clusters, prayer, sharing the Good News from each community of faith, naming the challenges being experienced by congregations & leadership, naming the possibilities & benefits of establishing an ongoing cluster, and sharing food (unless on Zoom). I'm in the process of confirming one contact person for each of the clusters and this list will be made available to the Region. Additionally, I've made overtures to three other areas not yet included in a geographic cluster but have not yet had a response from them. I want to check in with the congregations in Bermuda to learn about their relationship with each other.

Those listed are certainly not the only active clusters within the Region. Not all of them are visible outside their immediate area. For example, a 'Mid Valley Cluster' representing four Valley communities of faith formed several years ago when all those CoFs were faced with changes in pastoral relations. The three CoFs in the south end of Halifax have been clustering in many ways for several years and have recently made the decision to amalgamate. In cluster meetings from one end of the province to the other, I've heard about local inter-church groups which are regularly collaborating on local events and worship.

1. Regional committees, groups, staff & other Regions: I've spoken with the following

Regional committees: United Fresh Start, BNS Affirming Committee, Association of UCC Ministers, BNS Future Directions, and Justice, Mission & Outreach. I've consulted with Rev. Sharon Ballantyne (Growth), David Hewitt (Pastoral Relations & Congregational Support), Seyi Adeyemo (Communications), Rev. Jenny Stephens (Restructuring Review), and Rev. Faith March-McCuish (Executive Minister). Letters of inquiry have been sent to all other 15 Regions and responses received from four. I'll have more to say about these conversations and will include more background from the wider context in my final report and recommendations.

What I've noticed so far:

Community: United Church people enjoy, value and benefit from being together, especially in person. We are, after all, community-nurtured people. What has changed in recent years has been that we are fewer and, in some cases, farther between, plus we have had fewer structured reasons to get together for several years and one big reason to 'social distance'. No surprises here, but the detrimental effects are becoming more damaging to our ecclesial health and 'connective tissue' over time. Clusters form easily where there is at least one person with an interest in or commitment to the idea. Significant effort is required to bring people together where distances are expanded by pastoral vacancies, the absence of lay representatives, undependable internet services, or a lack of appreciation for the former presbytery relationship.

Takes a Village: Research into various circles of relationship indicate our "village" is the circle of people with whom we have regular significant engagement, who help us to grow and thrive. This is where central stories are shared around a "common fire" and where we are known by name and valued for our gifts. Researchers define the village as approximately 15 people aka a cluster. I have a renewed appreciation for the power of small groups and their potential to help our denomination survive, perhaps thrive. I've had the biggest challenge bringing together groups that are too large as this seems to breed lack of commitment. I'm working on identifying smaller circles within the larger ones.

Appendix C - continued**CLUSTER ANIMATOR** - continued

Communication: Experiences of isolation and disconnection from colleagues, next-door neighbors, and the wider United Church are regularly expressed aloud in cluster conversations. Weekly Regional announcements and national *E-ssentials* newsletter require finding and subscribing. In the meantime, those announcements are put through the local recipient's sieve. The Regional Directory has disappeared temporarily. I haven't noticed that our Regional Facebook page is particularly active. Searchers need to locate last year's nominating report to uncover contacts for Regional committees. The information gathered in respect to clusters through last year's extensive Restructuring Review Survey was mislaid and I have not yet seen it. It has been difficult to have access to a contact list for Regional Representatives. On the other hand, I'm grateful to learn that the BNS website is scheduled for revision this summer. It has been suggested a reinvigorated BNS Communications Committee might become a 'Communications & Clusters Committee', thereby bringing together those who are speaking and those who are listening.

Toward 2035: This initiative has been mentioned in every cluster I've visited since the beginning of 2026, except for the Affirming Communities Cluster. A few clusters plan to focus on this in an upcoming conversation. Given the focus of the initiative and the expectation every community of faith will engage T2035, it seems to me that Clusters will be a very useful vehicle to share and explore the information in future.

Resources: Cluster participants easily name their needs or wants in terms of resources. I'll include a list of suggestions in my final report.

Magic Sauce: A simple formula has evolved within cluster meetings which is proving effective in bringing clusters together and generating a commitment to ongoing gatherings.

- **Step One: Meet together.** In-person conversations are much more effective developing new relationships but Zoom meetings provide helpful links over distance and through the winter months. An underappreciated ingredient in face-to-face meetings is the opportunity to visit the sacred space (church building) and common ground for our neighbor's ministry.
- **Step Two: Eat together.** We unite around hospitality, holy manners and Christ's presence. Informal conversations build trust. Eating together, if only Timbits and coffee, allows us to get to know each other on a deeper level.
- **Step Three: Feet together.** When we share our stories around the table, common values, aspirations, and concerns are revealed. The possibility also arises for moving forward, 'feet together' in the same direction, addressing a new idea for ministry collaboratively.

Thanks. I am very grateful for the support I've received from the BNS Regional staff, ministry colleagues, friends, and all the people who have opened their inboxes, doors, and zoom windows to me during past months. This work has been a great source of joy.

Respectfully submitted,

Robyn

Robyn Brown-Hewitt (she/her/Rev)