

**Toronto Conference Living Into Right Relations Circle Notes**  
**May 13, 2016**  
**Midhurst United Church**

Present: Brian McIntosh (interim co-convenor), David Allen, Debbie Cauch-McIntosh, John Gilbert, Dave Gordon, Robert Hockley, Meiske Hockley, Elizabeth McLean, John McLean, Bryan Ransom

Guests: Anne Hepburn, Cynthia O'Connell

Regrets: Jody Maltby (staff), Gloria McCavery, Betty-Lou McNabb, Peggy Monague, Linda Parsons

**Welcome, opening, check in**

Interim co-convenor Brian McIntosh called the gathering together at 10:05 a.m. He offered thanks to the Midhurst congregation for making the space available. He noted that Peggy Monague, Delores Charles and Linda Parsons all have cancer at the moment and are receiving treatments. He led the group in worship, followed by check-in.

**Affirming Ministry**

Brian welcomed Anne Hepburn and Cynthia O'Connell, members of the Conference's task group working on the process of the Conference becoming an Affirming Ministry. They explained the kind of issues and sensitivities that are involved in becoming an Affirming Ministry. They led a discussion with the Circle about how its work might be informed and changed by the Conference being an Affirming Ministry.

**Notes from March meeting**

The group reviewed the notes from the March 18 meeting, noting that Meiske's name was spelled incorrectly. The group AGREED that the notes were accurate.

Annual meeting: Bryan spoke about the Conference's annual meeting which has a theme of weaving stories of God's love and a focus on right relations.

June 25 educational event: The event at Georgina Island may be moved elsewhere because of health challenges for some of the leadership. The group AGREED that if any changes in venue are going to be made, the changes need to be communicated right away.

30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of apology: Plans are underway to have a busload of people who will attend the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Church's apology delivered in 1986. There are lots of resources available. Jody will be working with presbytery representatives to plan this event.

LIRR co-convenor: Since the Circle last met, the Conference Executive named Brian as interim co-convenor while Linda recuperates.

Restorative Relations Working Group (Council Fire): Brian reported that there is a growing number of denominations and religious groups who are attending the meetings at Council Fire. They are focussing on actions that will help to fulfil the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action. The group is supportive of the reconciliation and the arts proposal that Brian has mentioned previously, and will be looking at actions that might be taken related to Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017.

KAIROS campaign re TRC call #62 on education: The Winds of Change campaign is now closed in Ontario and the petitions have been shared with the provincial authorities. The campaign continues in other provinces. Brian noted a report from People for Education entitled *Moving toward Reconciliation in Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools*. See <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/pfe-news/new-report-indigenous-education-ontarios-public-schools/>.

## **Lunch**

Brian offered grace. The group broke for lunch at 12:40 p.m. and reconvened around 1:20 p.m.

KAIROS blanket exercise support: The group discussed again how to offer financial support in places where the blanket exercise is being done and AGREED that planners of blanket exercise events will be able to apply for a grant up to \$300 for any blanket exercise costs. The amount available will be capped at \$3,000 for now. The total amount can be revisited. The source will be the Conference Fund.

The group AGREED that LIRR will not buy a block of tickets to the Jesuit event on June 22, but upon further discussion AGREED that the budget for LIRR will include an offer of up to \$100 per LIRR member in 2016 to attend right relations events.

David will get a financial up-date for LIRR.

Conference right relations fund: David confirmed that the Executive agreed that the \$50,000 in annual funding for right relations work will focus on TRC follow-up actions and events that support United Church right relations activities.

2017 Reconciliation and the Arts Festival: A planning meeting will be gathering shortly; Brian is part of the planning group.

## **New items/issues**

United Church statement re the UN Declaration: The United Church's statement on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People lacks specifics though a group is working on ideas for how to implement UNDRIP within the United Church.

River Run 2016: Dave spoke about River Run, a political advocacy effort for the Grassy Narrows people who are experiencing mercury poisoning in their waters. The hope is

that up to 2,000 people will go to Queen's Park to offer support. Council Fire is looking after tobacco tying for everyone who will attend.

There will also be a mass blanket exercise at 1:30 p.m. May 30 at Queen's Park. A lunch will be available at Church of the Redeemer.

There will be a number of activities over a three-day period. See [www.freegrassy.net](http://www.freegrassy.net).

Harmony Collaboration: The group discussed whether to offer a financial contribution to the Harmony Collaboration. Brian acknowledged that this had come to the group because he is the co-chair of the project. The group AGREED that Brian could remain in the room during the discussion.

The group AGREED to provide \$1,000 of support from the Conference Fund, and on a future agenda will discuss criteria for support for other events that might emerge.

LIRR decision-making, expenses approval, etc.: The group AGREED that consensus will be the manner in which decisions are made.

The group AGREED that the co-convenors and staff can make financial decisions between meetings up to \$500 with reporting back to the full group at its next gathering.

Education group purpose: The group discussed the work that Bryan, Betty-Lou, Delores and Jody had done on educational events, but there wasn't clarity about their accountability. Are they accountable to LIRR, to the Executive? Bryan said that he didn't expect the group to continue unless LIRR mandates a new group to do some educational follow-up with LIRR, the witnesses and the Conference.

The group AGREED that Jody, Bryan, Brian and David will develop a proposal for the LIRR and the Executive to look at regarding a consultation on right relations work. The consultation would cover topics such as educational planning, nurturing the witnesses, use of the Conference Fund, and how the LIRR mandate might be affected.

## **Other**

Brian mentioned three pick-up items: a United Church response to a *Globe & Mail* story about the church's obligations; an article about child welfare for indigenous children; and reflections from the church's General Secretary Nora Sanders about aboriginal ministries within the church.

## **Closing**

Brian offered thanks to the group for working through a lot of material during the day. He closed with a blessing and benediction from the blanket exercise booklet.