

Report to November 9, 2016 Executive meeting Major Executive decisions

Over the last three years, the Executive has made a number of significant decisions that have affected its priorities and/or its call to live out the Conference's mission. This report deals with four of those decisions as a way of looking at the Executive's overall priorities. Three of these items – right relations, Affirming Ministry and a relationship with Seoul Presbytery may be on-going. Refugee sponsorship is likely a one-time action.

Right Relations

The Executive named right relations as a priority item. Conference made it possible for a number of people to attend the final Truth and Reconciliation closing event in Edmonton, helped a significant number of people to attend the closing TRC event in Ottawa, and was represented at the 30th anniversary of the United Church's apology in Sudbury. The remainder of this section was written by Jody Maltby, staff assigned to right relations work.

Community Projects with Georgina Island, Christian Island and Toronto Urban Native Ministries (TUMN)

Brian McIntosh and Susie Henderson had an initial meeting with staff at Toronto Urban Native Ministries on September 20th. Beth Baskin was also there representing Toronto Southeast Presbytery. It was a good meeting, and Evan Smith of TUMN came to the conversation with an already drafted proposal to collaborate with a staff person at Metropolitan UC to create an Elder Circle who would be available to form relationships and respond to requests from churches and others for an Indigenous presence. Evan will tweak the proposal slightly after the conversation at the meeting and will submit it for approval. There was also a real willingness to be in relationship going forward, and to explore what that might look like.

Jody Maltby and Todd McDonald had a similarly good meeting with the Christian Island community on September 22nd. That community is considering a project that will focus on language revitalization, including the purchase of hymn books in Ojibwa and also developing an ecumenical choir on the Island. They are also looking at projects that would improve their building as it was felt that having a building that is warm and safe is an important part of being a welcoming church. The Board will have more conversations with other members of the community and will provide a proposal when they are ready.

Jody Maltby spent two days on Georgina Island with a group of young people working with members of the community to build a Healing Lodge. This project was organized by Jake Charles and was for Living Waters Presbytery specifically, but is a good step towards the conversation around a community project funded by Toronto Conference. The youth will be returning in the spring to plant trees and we will look for ongoing projects on which we might partner.

Moderator's Visit

We had a good conversation with the Moderator on Indigenous Justice and Right Relations on October 22. Approximately 45 people were present and this included some who had been to all four educational events this year and some for whom it was their first gathering. The Moderator encouraged us first and foremost to be faithful in showing up when we are invited places by Indigenous groups and second to not be afraid of making mistakes, apologizing, and moving on.

Our next event will be in the spring and will focus on acknowledging the traditional territories on which our churches are located, and how to go about building relationships at the local level.

Ontario Based Right Relations Work

On September 29 at 10:00 a.m. representatives from all the Conferences in Ontario gathered by conference call to consider ways that we might partner on right relations work, particularly in advocacy with the Ontario Government. After each Conference shared highlights of their work in right relations, a number of possible ideas for shared work were identified. It was agreed that each Conference would go back to their network to share what has been discussed on this call, and name one representative to form an Ontario wide network and identify priority areas of work for that network. Brian McIntosh and David Allen will organize a call in early 2017 for the identified representatives from each Conference.

Meeting with Toronto United Church Council

Brian McIntosh and Jody Maltby met with the Board of TUCC on Thursday October 20th to talk about possible ideas for how TUCC could continue to support right relations work in the Conference as part of their commitment to the Calls from the TRC. TUCC focused their annual "Heart and Vision" event on right relations, honouring Dr. Marie Wilson, one of the three commissioners of the TRC and Dr. Roberta L. Jamieson, President of Indspire, Canada's premiere Indigenous-led charity.

Brian and Jody had a good conversation with the Board and a number of ideas were generated which the Board will consider going forward. The Board also expressed interest in partnering with the Living into Right Relations Circle on work.

Next Meeting of the LIRR Circle

The next meeting of the Circle will be on Tuesday, November 29, 2016 at Christian Island United Church starting at 10:30 a.m. The ferry leaves Cedar Point at 10:00 a.m. A pre-Christmas lunch will be provided with a time for conversation to finish by 2:45 p.m. with a return on the 3:30 p.m. ferry from Christian Island.

Question: Does the Executive continue to support right relations work as a priority?

Refugee sponsorships

In the fall of 2015 Executive approved up to \$500,000 to assist communities of faith with refugee sponsorship. To date \$480,000 has been distributed to local groups in almost every province and Conference.

Question: How does the refugee sponsorship work (or a future similar kind of issue) fit into the Conference's overall plans to live out its mission?

Affirming Ministry

Executive voted to begin the process toward becoming an Affirming Ministry within the United Church. A task group was established and conducted a first information session at the 2015 annual meeting. Subsequently, members of the task group have met with numerous Conference and presbytery committees, including the Conference Executive, to discuss what it would mean for the Conference to be affirming.

The task group will be working with the Executive in November to begin developing a vision statement and a plan of action. The task group will draft initial versions of both documents based on what it hears from the Executive. The documents will come to the Executive in February and again in April before forwarding the documents to the annual meeting for discussion and a vote on whether to become an Affirming Ministry.

Question: How will the Executive's work (and all related Conference actions) impacted by becoming an Affirming Ministry?

Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK)

Conference responded positively to a request from the PROK to develop a partnership arrangement. The first step was to send a delegation of Toronto Conference people to Seoul Presbytery in October, 2016. All presbyteries were represented on the trip, and all presbyteries contributed financially. A similar group from Seoul Presbytery will visit Toronto Conference in May, 2017.

The impetus for this initiative seems to be the mutual recognition of ministries between the PROK and The United Church of Canada. While the Toronto Conference group was in Seoul, we were part of a mission conference where we discussed ways in which we can support one another. Some of what we have to offer include youth empowerment in the courts of the church, support for sabbaticals and those exploring ministry, information about church amalgamations and closures, etc.

Question: Recognizing that there is uncertainty caused by the remit on whether the Conference will continue to exist, is the Executive committed to developing a relationship with Seoul Presbytery?