

LIVING WATERS PRESBYTERY

1. What is most important? (This is not easy to decide.)

The Living Presence Ministry is an innovative response to the massive development in East Gwillimbury, north of Newmarket. We have engaged a community pioneer minister to live in the new area and work with residents to discern their needs rather than plant a new church. She will be a spiritual presence for new folk and also work closely with the existing churches in the area. We are very excited to see this major work come to fruition.

2. Challenges

One challenge is the trend toward part time ministers and even two-point charges wanting to separate and each have their own part time minister. Another one is to attain pastoral charge supervisors for vacant charges. A set of guidelines have been developed for those willing to be supervisors.

3. TRC Calls to Action

Numerous Communities of Faith have had one or more TRC events especially for Aboriginal Day. A youth “lodge building” experience was a successful activity last Thanksgiving weekend on Georgina Island. Trish Cowie, an Aboriginal lawyer, spoke at one of our presbytery meetings. Our Commission responsible for TRC work took part in a Right Relations workshop. For the future: (a) encourage pastoral charges to hold a blanket exercise (b) consider “Minute for TRC” resources for communities of faith (c) recommend a right relations orientation for new ministry personnel.

4. Changes

Lakeside United Church closed in October, 2016.

5. Hopes

We hope that funding and other support will be available to continue our many worthwhile endeavours including, but not limited to: (a) Open Hands United (mission trips – especially for youth - to Nicaragua) (b) Camp Awesome (week-long vacation bible camps which travel to many different churches) (c) Refugee support (d) Camp Big Canoe (e) The above-mentioned Living Presence Ministry and TRC activities (f) Learning Cohorts (see below).

6. Other

1. Learning cohorts are contributing to leadership development in Living Waters and EDGE is looking at ways to replicate our model. The first clergy cohort has had opportunities to build trusting collegial relationships and explore theory and skills that can enhance their leadership. Hands-on exercises have assessed current and

experimental practices in a safe learning environment. Recently two more cohorts have begun; another one for clergy and one for lay members which has affirmed the importance of letting each group follow its own interests and styles of leaning.

2. At a recent meeting, our multi-year process came to a conclusion when Living Waters Presbytery became an affirming presbytery.
3. We are in the process of a new endeavour whereby a youth minister is being hired to be housed in a specific community of faith, but to have involvement and responsibility to re-vision and re-build youth ministry throughout our presbytery.
4. We are supporting our Licensed Lay Worship leaders-in-training and our Designated Lay Ministry candidates as well as our ministry students. We have had an increase in the number of supervised ministry education sites in the presbytery.
5. We had three enthusiastic participants from our presbytery benefit from the exchange trip to Korea to learn about PROK. They gave an informative and interesting report at a presbytery meeting.
6. Lastly, in Living Waters we are very proud of our flow of information and communication efforts. The minutes of meetings for our presbytery and the Commissions as well as the Executive are always clear and complete. So, congratulations is owed to our volunteer secretaries. Our outstanding monthly (except in the summer) Presbytery Newsletter is a major component of our efforts to share information. Also, one of our Commissions publishes a social justice newsletter several times a year. Thus, we express our thanks for a job well done to the editors of these publications.

NORTHERN WATERS PRESBYTERY

What is the most important/meaningful thing(s) done in your presbytery in the last year?

Our focus this past year has been voting on the remits. Education was done at both the presbytery level and with the community of faiths that were interested in attending sessions that were offered. We have begun the work to look at becoming an affirming presbytery. We have an Affirming Task Group that is leading us in the process.

The Congregational Life Commission has been working on Cooperative Innovative Ministries. The Cooperative Innovative Ministry report was published in September 2016. It summarized the findings of the four consultations that were held in the presbytery from September 2015 to June 2016. There are examples offered in the report of possible innovative and cooperative ministries. The Commission has held numerous meetings with pastoral charges and is open to exploring different possible configurations. This work is ongoing.

What are the major challenges your presbytery is facing?

Getting volunteers to fill various roles is one of the ongoing challenges. Although, we are grateful for the volunteers, both the laity and ministry personnel who have agreed to serve in the regular and often challenging work of the Commissions, there are still vacancies in most Commissions. We still have several positions that need to be filled at the Toronto Conference level.

What are ways your presbytery and/or communities of faith have encouraged the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action? What are some of the future plans to enable Truth and Reconciliation to continue to be fostered in the presbytery?

Each meeting begins with the acknowledgement of the Aboriginal land on which we are meeting.

Have there been significant changes in ministry within the presbytery, e.g. new ministries, amalgamations, closures?

Victoria Memorial United Church, Honeywood was disbanded November 29, 2016. Hockley, Adjala (Rainey's) and Mono Mills United Church amalgamated at the end of June 2016. North Derby & Chalmers, Keady United Church amalgamation was approved September 2016 to take effect June 4, 2017. Discussions are taking place with other pastoral charges considering closure or amalgamation due to dwindling resources.

Considering the possible changes in the United Church's structure, what are your hopes for the future?

Our hope is to help communities of faith transition to a new system as positively and equipped as possible and that they will feel that they have support when it is needed. We hope too we will be able to find ways to support communities of faith in a meaningful way as they struggle to determine their future.

Are there other topics about which you would like to report?

Northern Waters Presbytery is always busy with programs for youth and youth leaders. This year youth, with the support of UCWs and congregations, created over 400 bags to take to Ronald McDonald House in Toronto. They went to the Niagara Youth Festival, and attended a program at Teen Ranch in the winter. They took part in a Confirmation Retreat weekend that is done in union with Living Waters Presbytery. Open Hands United Youth Mission to Nicaragua Team, in preparation for their July trip, has met regularly to prepare. The youth are looking forward to a dog sledding weekend event with the Moderator next winter. We continually look at what we offer and how we meet the needs we hear about. We have new youth leaders and youth leaders in training who are hooking into our network and resources. We are working with Camp Simpresca to get new campers and to support the camp in its work. We enjoy an annual youth leader retreat for training, resources and

restoration. We're working hard at helping to network and create connections between churches and leaders in the work that we do.

SOUTH WEST PRESBYTERY

South West Presbytery has been involved in a gradual change in the governance structure. The purpose of this change has been to:

1. Focus the work of the presbytery on revitalization of Communities of Faith.
2. Streamline the governance structure and involve more presbyters in presbytery work and achieve greater diversity in representation on working teams.
3. Break down the silos between the various committees/teams.

The Governance team, in 2017, reviewed how well the structure worked. It indicated that the one hour before the presbytery meeting did not appear to be enough time to undertake more extensive work. Quorum for some teams under this approach was also an issue. However, several interesting off-shoots have occurred as follows:

1. A new and more robust handbook is almost complete.
2. The Nominations team chose to conduct orientation sessions for new presbyters, during the hour before each plenary session, with a positive response.
3. The Governance team has been retained to provide continuous evaluation of the new structure and address any issues as they arise.
4. Key teams have experienced a growth in numbers of new people willing to serve and contribute to the work of the teams, as encouraged during the orientation sessions.
5. A more direct approach to chairs of boards and councils has been attempted. In June, an orientation session for chairs of boards/councils is planned by the presbytery chair and the Conference Personnel Minister to assist chairs both new and experienced, to understand their role and their relationship to other courts of the church.
6. Any proposal coming from a Commission or team which involves funding, must work with the Mission Support and Finance (MSF) team before presenting its proposal to presbytery. The MSF team has developed an application process which demands a more accountable approach to funding. Also, the impact on the financial health of the presbytery of funding any proposal is more transparent.

The Property team facilitated the sharing of capital assets between three churches and assisted three additional churches to forward their mission through renovation.

The Education and Students team currently has four inquirers, two Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, two Designated Lay Minister Candidates and eight Ordained Ministry Candidates.

A Regional Youth Project, developed by the Youth and Young Adults team and supported by Faith Formation and the Intercultural and Diverse Communities teams was initiated in June of 2016. The project team responsible for this initiative is currently developing a

three-year plan, based on their learning as to what works and what does not work where the faith development and involvement of the youth of today is concerned.

Social Justice and World Affairs (SJWA) team worked in coalition with others, cultivating interfaith relationships, developing a social media presence and engaging young people in the fight against poverty, racism, Islamophobia and colonialism as it relates to Mining Justice. SJWA also supported ECULINKS and Islington United Church's work of providing workshops and establishing a refugee sponsorship network that has become a valuable resource to Toronto Conference.

As with most presbyteries, the major challenge has been to find volunteers to participate in the work of the presbytery. Not all of the ministerial staff has chosen to consistently attend the presbytery meetings. Also, a number of communities of faith have been slowly moving toward a time when they need to consider their ongoing viability.

In an attempt to make the presbytery aware of the impact of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we acknowledge the land at the beginning of the executive team meetings and the plenary sessions of presbytery. About \$ 8,970.00 was allocated to address the short fall in the Conference Mission and Service funding grants for support of Indigenous ministries of Christian Island, the Toronto Urban Ministry and Georgina Island.

Two new migrant churches (one of Korean origin and one Filipino church) have been established under the careful guidance of the Mission, Migrant Welcome and Church Plant team. An additional Francophone community of faith is currently being provided with financial assistance as it starts up in ministry. St Paul's Long Branch has amalgamated with Alderwood. St. Paul's in Brampton is trying a two-year clustering experiment with Grace United Church, which will be evaluated in two years, as to its effectiveness. The Mission Present and Future team have developed a document to guide churches facing amalgamation, which includes a mission plan as a key requirement.

The Community Ministries Commission has been developing scenarios to assist them to decide on a viable strategic plan for the future of the two presbytery supported ministries. As to the future of The United Church of Canada, the effectiveness and evolution of the church will be affected largely by the details of how the remits are implemented. Our presbytery is attempting to prepare for regionalization by trying alternative methods of communication such as meeting by Skype, conference calls and the use of a telephone hub in order to determine how effective these means of communication will be in the future.

Some concern has been expressed as to how communities of faith will fare in a regionalized model. Currently, the Pastoral Relations team keeps close tabs on all churches, with the use of a spreadsheet, in order to address concerns early, before they become major issues. There are concerns about the loss of close connections in which there will be less guidance and support to offer to communities of faith. Communities of faith will have more autonomy under the new structure and there is a lack of confidence that this will be helpful for them or for the wider church.

In June of 2016, we received a report addressing intercultural ministry which was prepared by Rev. Dong-Chun Seo, who did a study of intercultural ministry in our presbytery and in other Christian denominations. Some principles were developed to make us aware of how to become a more intercultural church.

The Mission Present and Future Commission is currently developing a skills-based approach to support communities of faith moving towards a process of revitalization.

South West Presbytery is eagerly preparing to welcome our Moderator in May of 2017 with an expo of what we are about, which will include food and entertainment.

TORONTO SOUTHEAST PRESBYTERY

- *What is the most important/meaningful thing(s) done in your presbytery in the last year?*

Toby's Place

On Monday, May 1, the Moderator of the United Church, The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell attended the official opening of Toby's Place which is a new safe space for LGBTQ+ youth in South West Scarborough, located at Birchcliff Bluffs United Church. Toby's Place is the response to a plea from a local youth for a place somewhere near home that feels safe and nurturing. Rev. Christine Smaller, minister at Birchcliff Bluffs chaired the opening and Rev. Dr. Cheri DiNovo shared in the celebration.

Fresh Expressions at Danforth and Main

Fresh Expressions is a presbytery supported project which began in March 2016. Brian Stevens, a candidate for ordination, is the Worship Leader at Hope and with Fresh Expressions. The project is reaching people in the community who might not have attended a more traditional congregation. Through music, fellowship, gathering together for a meal, as well as the exploration of alternative ways of worship, there is a strong sense that the Hope doors are open and all are welcome. Some people who came to Hope as part of Fresh Expressions have started to attend Hope and are a source of vibrancy for the congregation and community.

- *What are the major challenges your presbytery is facing?*

Several congregations are amalgamating and one is closing as reported below. Congregations are facing both financial and leadership concerns. Walking with these congregations has required considerable staff and volunteer time. The biggest challenge is to face changing times in a positive way, to find new ways of being church and to discover again the good news and learn how to share it.

- *What are ways your presbytery and/or communities of faith have encouraged the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action? What are some of the future plans to enable Truth and Reconciliation to continue to be fostered in the presbytery?*

We begin each Executive and plenary meeting by lighting the four directions candles as we acknowledge the land. The focus of the June plenary meeting will be ‘Reconciling and Making New.’

Several congregations within the presbytery continue to engage with local Indigenous groups, advocate and study. Others are sharing in blanket exercises.

Daamishkooziimin, the sharing circle for Indigenous Adoptees and Sixties Scoop Survivors, meets monthly at Council Fire Native Cultural Centre.

Gibimishkaadimin is a project of Toronto Urban Native Ministry, Bloor St., Fairlawn and Rosedale United Churches to engage ten Indigenous and ten non-Indigenous youth on a one week canoe trip on Lake Superior for the next five years. The Very Reverend Stan McKay will travel with them.

• Have there been significant changes in ministry within the presbytery, e.g. new ministries, amalgamations, closures?

There will be significant changes in our presbytery this year. Presteign-Woodbine and Leaside United Churches will amalgamate on June 10, 2017; Bedford Park and Northlea United Churches will amalgamate on May 14, 2017; St. John’s and Jubilee United Churches will amalgamate on July 1, 2017 and Church of the Master will close on June 30, 2017.

Four congregations, Cosburn, Eastminster, Hope, and Glen Rhodes are continuing discussions about an East End Ministry. Presbytery has provided considerable financial and volunteer support since 2011. The congregations will vote June 4, 2017 on a plan to “shape the way they will share in Christ’s ministry together.”

There are interview teams in five congregations working with Conference liaisons. In the next year, five congregations are preparing for changes in pastoral relations because of retirement or resignation or looking for additional staff.

• Considering the possible changes in the United Church’s structure, what are your hopes for the future?

Most congregations have completed the MAP (Mission Articulation process) and are using the goals to shape their work. The presbytery has offered workshops and support in the areas of interest. Some of the workshops have been well attended, but others have not been supported and were cancelled which was very disappointing.

Assuming that there will be a new organizational model for the United Church, the executive of Toronto Southeast Presbytery believes that the work of the presbytery should be specifically focused on developing strong United Church Ministries in Eastern Toronto, currently the area encompassed by Toronto Southeast Presbytery.

Many congregations within Toronto Southeast Presbytery have the potential to be stronger and more resilient than at present. To support our congregations, Toronto Southeast Presbyteries approved a Presbyteries of Toronto Conference Corp. (PTCC) grant to fund a staff person and consulting work to strengthen our capacity to fulfil the goal of supporting, equipping and renewing congregations in the presbytery by facilitating congregational revitalization and facilitating faith formation initiatives.

This investment is a worthwhile, forward-looking legacy project for the presbytery.

- *Are there other topics about which you would like to report?*

Celebration of Ministry at Conference

Maya Brathwaite, currently serving at Bloor Street United Church and Calin Lau, a member of Toronto Chinese United Church will be ordained at the Annual Meeting of Toronto Conference. Ricardo Silva, minister in the Pontes de Graça (Portuguese Ministry) at College Street United Church will be admitted into the United Church.

Plenary meetings – Remits

Time was allocated at four of the five plenary meetings to study and discuss the remits. Members had considered the topic which ensured good conversation and discussion at each meeting. The plenary voted in favour of Remits #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #7 and #8. After considerable discussion, the court decided to postpone the vote on remit #6 until September.

