

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
TORONTO CONFERENCE**

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Executive of Toronto Conference
Wednesday, January 17, 2018**

The Executive of Toronto Conference met at the Northern Waters Presbytery office on Wednesday, January 17, 2018. The meeting began at 10:02 a.m. A quorum was present.

Members present

Audrey Brown (President), Bryan Ransom (Past-President), Jody Maltby (Executive Secretary), Sharon Aylsworth (Toronto Southeast), Terry Davies (Living Waters), Gail Hamblin (South West), Henry MacLeod (South West), Betty Lou McNabb (Living Waters), Lawrence Nyarko (diversity), Jessica Stevenson (diversity) – via FaceTime

Regrets

Ed Elliotson (Northern Waters), Anne Hepburn (Toronto Southeast), Eiko Hosaka (diversity), Roger Hutchinson (Toronto Southeast), Kristal McGee (Northern Waters), Angus MacLennan (Living Waters), Thérèse Samuel (Northern Waters)

Absent

- (South West)

Community building, listening to God

Constituting the Court and introductions

President Audrey Brown welcomed everyone and constituted the meeting in the name of Jesus Christ to conduct the business properly brought before it.

Worship/lighting the Christ candle/acknowledging the land

As the representatives from Northern Waters were not present, the President lit the Christ candle. January 17 is the Feast day of St. Mildgytha, a Benedictine Nun who became abbess of a Northumbrian convent and who represents hope. The President shared a daily prayer from her community which is still active today. The President then spoke of the beauty of winter and that there is a winter in all of our lives. God has created winter for a purpose, a time of rest, to stand still and draw strength from the one in whom we are rooted. The Executive offered prayers for Anne Hepburn as she gathers with community this week to celebrate the life of her mother.

Questions for evaluating the meeting

For this meeting, the Executive focused on the following questions:

What voices have been heard? What voices have we not heard? What have we done or not done that's going to make a better church? What will be our legacy?

Adoption of agenda

MOTION by Sharon Aylsworth/Betty Lou McNabb that the agenda, with the addition of a conversation on the proposed staffing models, be adopted.

MOTION

CARRIED.

Monitoring and Compliance with Policies

Executive Secretary's report

The Executive Secretary's report (Appendix A) had a number of items where discussion was requested or up-dates given.

Members had an opportunity to ask questions about the entire report.

- Staffing Update: The Executive Secretary provided an update on contract staff positions within the presbyteries.
- Annual Reports from Presbyteries: The Executive discussed the questions to be answered by the presbyteries in their annual reports.

MOTION by Lawrence Nyarko/Sharon Aylsworth that the presbyteries be asked to respond to the following questions in their annual reports:

Reflecting on the past nine years, what has been significant about your presbytery?

What are the main priorities that you would like to see carried into the new region(s) you will be in?

What financial commitments have you made that extend beyond December 2018?

Why are these commitments important to your presbytery?

MOTION

CARRIED.

- Meeting on February 7: The Executive Secretary provided an update on plans for the joint meeting with the executives of the four presbyteries and PTCC on February 7. The meeting will begin at 10 a.m. at St. John's United Church, Alliston. Lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to Linda Gray if you can attend.

The Executive asked that the Anishnawbe Health Centre be a topic of discussion on this date or at a future meeting to consider an additional donation.

It was suggested that we focus on how we can make this a Jubilee Year for the United Church and also how Toronto Conference can give leadership in a conversation among the Conferences about how we share resources equitably across the church. This could include a formal proposal to General Council 43, possibly from all the Conferences. We do not want to miss the opportunity to do things in a different way.

- Voting on Remit 6: The Executive Secretary reported on the request of the Executive to obtain a list of all those who have not yet voted on Remit 6. This list was received by the Conference on November 22, 2017, forwarded to the Chairs and Secretaries of the four presbyteries and copied to program staff. An updated list was received on January 16, 2018 and has also been forwarded.

The President asked that follow-up happen with Northern Waters as they are not at the table today to make sure that communication with pastoral charges will happen.

Business matters to be considered by the Executive

Minutes

MOTION by Bryan Ransom/Terry Davies that the Executive approve the minutes of the November 8, 2017 Executive meeting and receive for information the sub-Executive minutes from its meeting of November 1, 2, 20 & 21, 2017.

MOTION

CARRIED.

Correspondence

MOTION by Betty Lou McNabb/Sharon Aylsworth that the correspondence report (Appendix B), including the Proposed Regional Staffing Models (Appendix D), be received and the recommended actions be taken.

MOTION

CARRIED.

Omnibus motion

MOTION by Bryan Ransom/Betty Lou McNabb that the Toronto Conference Executive take the following action:

- a) Suitability for Ministry of Applicant for Admission

...on the advice of its Conference Interview Committee, which has reviewed the application and references from the applicant and has met and interviewed the applicant for admission, hereby recognize the Rev. Candice Bist as suitable to proceed in the admission process to the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada as an ordained minister.

MOTION

CARRIED.

Anishnawbe Health Centre

The Executive considered the request from a member of Trinity-St. Paul's that we make a donation to the new health centre. The Executive Secretary reported that both the Living Into Right Relations Circle and the Toronto Urban Native Ministry support our making a donation. The Executive wants the funds to be used at their discretion but acknowledge that this will be one of the last significant acts of Right Relations on behalf of the Conference and we hope that the donation will be recognized in some way in the centre.

MOTION by Terry Davies/Bryan Ransom that the Executive of Toronto Conference donate \$100,000 as a legacy gift in support of the Anishnawbe Health Centre, funds to come first from the remaining money in the 2017 Right Relations Fund and the remainder to come from the Conference Fund.

MOTION

CARRIED.

Interim Report of the Boundaries Commission

The Executive discussed the interim report of the Boundaries Commission (Appendix C). The deadline for a response is January 31, 2018. Any request to change the boundaries must come in the form of a motion of a court of the church, in this case from the Executive of the Conference. The Executive Secretary will send the following rationale with the motion to the Boundaries Commission.

The Commission identified the importance of a mix of rural and urban communities in creating the regions. Our recommendation would leave region 11 without a rural context. However, Toronto, Mississauga and Oshawa have a large and varied migrant community which is equally important. We would suggest that this is a fair trade for losing the urban rural mix. We also note that a strong public transportation system running east and west through Toronto makes the commute from Mississauga or Oshawa in and out of Toronto more accessible than travel to and from the communities in Living Waters and Northern Waters Presbyteries. This is important as a number of people in the Toronto area do not drive and/or do not own a car.

MOTION by Terry Davies/Jessica Stevenson that the Executive of Toronto Conference recommends that Region 11 extend east to the Port Hope boundary line, include all of Toronto Southeast Presbytery and all of South West Presbytery

save Halton Region, Living Waters Presbytery south of Hwy 7, and the city of Mississauga.

An additional new region would include Living Waters Presbytery north of Hwy 7 and Northern Waters Presbytery north of Hwy 7 and east of either Hwy 124 or Hwy 50, save Ballinafad Pastoral Charge and Acton Pastoral Charge (which would remain in Region 10).

We would add our support to any individual pastoral charge within the current bounds of Toronto Conference who wish to be in a different region than they've been assigned and specifically support the requests of Trinity, Uxbridge and St. Paul's, Midland to be in a region with Living Waters Presbytery.

MOTION

CARRIED.

Lunch

The President offered grace at 12:00 p.m. The meeting resumed at 1:00 p.m.

Proposed Regional Staffing Models

The Executive discussed the proposed models for staffing the regions (Appendix D). The deadline for feedback is January 19, 2018. The Executive Secretary will forward the following comments to the Remit Implementation Task Group:

The primary role of the regions is support to communities of faith rather than traditional program work like planning events or workshops. We do not think that one model will fit the unique situations of the regions that will be developed. We need to be able to use more than one model and tailor the model to the mission of individual regions.

We need to experience the transition into regions before we know what staffing needs there will be. We favour hiring a transition staff team for a two-year project to help the regions transition and determine what their staffing needs are. The transition team will include staff in all the regions who will work effectively with, and provide support to volunteers, share resources and learnings in a time of significant change. At the end of the two years, some of the transitional staff may move into permanent staffing positions in the regions.

At GC42 we agreed to live within our means but we also recognize that we need to do this transition well. It may cost more in the short-term to have a transition staff team. We may need to ask the GC43 to allow us to continue to access funds for up to two more years to support this important work.

We favour hiring the Executive Ministers with an administrative support person as permanent staff who will work with the regional transition staff team. We think there

should be no less than 11 Executive Ministers. We need to balance sharing efficiencies with ensuring a local viewpoint.

We encourage the Executive Ministers and the transition staff team to begin in the last four months of 2018 to connect with current volunteers and get a sense of who is prepared to take on leadership roles in the first two years of the regions and who will need to be recruited.

We would like to see greater flexibility about options for where staff would work and how they would create community together so that staff are not necessarily tied to an office location.

Networking through networks and clusters should not be limited by regional boundaries. We encourage people who have been working together on specific ministry areas, such as youth ministry, who are in different regions, to continue to work together.

Whatever model(s) is (are) selected for staffing and offices it needs to be flexible for the changing needs of the church in the future.

We have concern about the proposed centralized technical services – what will that look like? How will it help us? The experience of Toronto Conference is that it has not been helpful to have the current shared internet and phone system with the General Council with a centralized IT department. There would need to be significant advancements in our program and technology in order for this to work.

The changes to the United Church will only work if we change our expectations around how we do business and how much we travel. We need to increase and improve our use of technology in an effective way. The greatest opportunity and challenge is to create a communication system that is easy and allows Communities of Faith and Regions to happily converse electronically so that distance becomes less of an issue. Where ever the regional staff are working, there needs to be a communication system that allows staff to connect well with each other and with Communities of Faith.

Meeting of the Conference Presidents and Leading Elders

The meeting of the Conference Presidents and Leading Elders is being held on February 5 – 7, 2018 at the General Council Office. As the President is unable to attend, we have been invited to send another member of the Executive instead. This will be a different gathering than the usual one, most of the time will be spent hearing from one another about plans in each of the Conferences. The Past-President offered to attend for the Monday and Tuesday but will be with us on the 7th.

Discussion items named by Executive members

There were no discussion items named in advance by members of the Executive.

Upcoming dates of Executive meetings: April 11th at the Conference Office and June 13th in Living Waters or by video conference.

Evaluation

The Executive Secretary shared feedback that was offered by Thérèse Samuel. The Executive discussed email communication. While appreciating the intent, the Executive confirmed that emails should continue to be sent blind carbon copy (bcc) because of the possibility that emails might be forwarded. The Executive confirmed that only those who will be attending a meeting of the sub-Executive should receive the materials for the meeting, due to the sensitive nature of the topics.

The Executive turned to the questions for evaluating the meeting. For this meeting, the Executive focused on what voices have been heard? What voices have we not heard? What have we done or not done that's going to make a better church? What will be our legacy?

The following comments were made:

- We left a legacy to the Anishnawbe Health Centre;
- We missed Northern Waters participation;
- We've done our work very well;
- We've raised the question of resources sharing to the wider church which will make a better church and will be our legacy;
- It was a very good meeting and we covered a lot of stuff;
- We tried to speak or hear the voices of all the Communities of Faith within our Conferences.

Closing

With the business completed, the President declared the meeting ended at 3:26 p.m. The President offered a blessing.

Audrey Brown
President

Jody Maltby
Executive Secretary