**ARW RC Fall Meeting – October 27 & 28, 2023**

The meeting took place on Zoom from 6:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. on Friday, and from 9:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. on Saturday. It was chaired by Rev. Cheryl Bolton, the new Regional President. This was her first meeting and so it was a little bumpy but she was also dealing with Zoom technology.

We had the usual greetings, worship and music, and the introduction of the Chairs of the various committees and their reports. There is an Equity Support Team Member Position open and I have a description of it if anyone is interested.

Then Thérèse Samuel, Minister, Right Relations & Social Justice, and John Egger, Minister Social Justice, led the Remit Education Update followed by questions. The remit is about continuing with our three-council structure but allowing an autonomous National Indigenous Organization within the United Church that can determine its own structure and processes. This was decided at the last General Council meeting in 2022. Because it changes the Basis of Union, it requires a remit. The questions were a bit brutal because there are those who have not taken advantage of the information that has been sent out over the past seven months through the newsletter and Facebook and didn’t know what it was all about and blamed the council for not educating them and “pushing it through”. Some were concerned about financial obligations but the Indigenous Church already receives funding and that should not change.

Following that there was a discussion about paying Pastoral Charge Supervisors. Rev. Sandra Fogarty has been reimbursed only for her travel expenses while she has worked with us since Rev. Wanda’s departure. Now the Community of Faith will be responsible for providing an honourarium based on $30 per hour to the Pastoral Charge Supervisor as of January 1, 2024. I have more details about that. As a matter of interest, 30% of the 136 Charges in ARW do not have a minister and 20% of those are searching.

In the Community of Faith of Life Cycle Changes, Belle River U.C. has disbanded, Guilds Pastoral Charge is now Rondeau Pastoral Charge, four pairs of churches have amalgamated or are working towards it, and Wesley U.C. has sold its building and is nesting with Charing Cross U.C.

We learned that Camp Tanner near Embro is closing and that the erosion problems at Kenesserie cost an extra $75,000 for a food truck, outdoor dining tent and other remedial costs.

After the last meeting in May, we were each sent an evaluation to fill out about our new governance model. The biggest complaint was that people no longer felt connected to each other with the loss of Presbytery. We had to chose one of nine topics and were then put in that group and had one hour to come up with solutions.

1. Connecting communities of faith to the Regional Council
2. Communication with communities of faith
3. Support to communities of faith searching for a new minister
4. Networking communities of faith
5. Enhancing “health, joy and excellence in ministry practice”
6. Connecting with retired ministry personnel
7. Supporting justice work in communities of faith
8. What is our purpose and how will we know we are living it out?
9. Equipping the church for “such a time as this”

I chose number one and we decided that everyone missed Presbytery but very few want to step up and organize a similar group on their own. In all of the areas that have a group meeting regularly for fellowship and an exchange of information, someone was taking the time to find a place to meet, to send out invitations, and to keep it going. Not really an over-all solution.

In the spring of 2024, the regional council will elect its commissioners to the 45th General Council in Calgary in July 2025. Diversity is important so the council was not pleased with the process to select the commissioners that it used in 2020 because, in trying to get representatives of specific diverse groups, the Regional Council overlooked that individuals may have multiple ways of identifying, i.e., both racialized and queer, both youth and Indigenous, etc. So, there were a lot of questions about how they were going to manage this and what they would do if a category was not represented in the applications.

The meeting actually ended a few minutes early and everyone was invited to attend the Zoom service at St. Andrew’s United in St. Thomas at 4:00 p.m. for a Celebration of Ministries Service for Janine Lunn.

The next meeting will be a Tri-Regional Meeting at the Unifor Centre in Port Elgin on the weekend of May 24, 25 and 26. The Moderator, Rev. Carmen Lansdowne, will be the guest speaker.