

Information Packet

Association of United Church Clergy

AGM 2023

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A. CHAIR'S REPORT - ASSOCIATION OF MINISTERS COMMITTEE AGM 2023

The Association of Ministers Committee continues to serve as a liaison between the Association of United Church Clergy (aUCC) and the Region. Having accomplished the incorporation of the aUCC we have been working with the Region Executive to establish a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the relationship of the aUCC and the Region. We're delighted that, with the successful completion of this work, a new relationship is forged and the Association of Ministers Committee will be removed from the Region governance structure.

Meanwhile, the aUCC has had an active year addressing the concerns of ministers within and beyond the Region. As of writing this report, the paid-up membership of the Association extends to several Regions beyond our own. We continue to work within the framework of the four key pillars: Community; Advocacy; Renewal; and Education. Some of our key accomplishments this year:

- We are pleased to provide a volunteer chaplain for all clergy (aUCC members or not) within the region. Information is on the web-site.
- We have held a number of in-person events, free or at low-cost to aUCC members (Holy Humour in May '22; in-person days in January and April) and have established a pattern of four, in-person events around the Region, to be held annually. Our fall retreat at Berwick will feature, Dr Matthew Anderson, Director of Camino Nova Scotia.
- We have prepared two proposals on subjects of interest to clergy for presentation at the Region Annual Meeting.
- We are now offering members resources on negotiating calls and appointments.
- We circulated a poll to Region clergy soliciting their experience in post-pandemic worship and Christian Education participation.
- Undertook advocacy work on issues important to members.

Most recently we have received a grant from the United Church Foundation to help foster clergy organizations in the other Atlantic Provinces. Whether or not this results in chapters of the aUCC is far less important than the creation of ways for clergy to support one another in vital, faithful, joyful, and sustainable ministry. The aUCC is one such model.

Membership in the Association is open to: Diaconal, Designated Lay, and Ordained ministers (active, retired and retained on the roll) and candidates currently serving in appointments. We continue to see the evidence of isolation and new pressure on ministry personnel. The absence in our polity of a voice or advocacy for clergy is increasingly evident. So, we remain convinced of the need for an Association within the United Church.

The aUCC would like to express our sincere appreciation to all ministers for their work in this time. You are creative, caring, innovative, and solid. Our church is blessed by your service.

Yours in ministry together

Rev Dr Ross Bartlett

Chair Region 15, Association of Ministers Committee

www.yoursanctuary.ca

B. FINANCIAL REPORTS

Profit and Loss, B.1; Debert Retreat Expenses, B.2

Financial Report Note: Not reflected in the following reports:

- United Church Foundation Grant \$5000
- Pinehill Divinity Hall Grant \$2500
- Regional Funds \$2638

The balance in the credit union is \$10, 218

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine MacDonald

Profit and Loss (Replaces Previous)
association of United Church Clergy

Date Range: Jan 01, 2022 to Dec 31, 2022

ACCOUNTS

**Jan 01, 2022
to Dec 31, 2022**

Income	
Debert Retreat 2022	\$4,200.00
Interest	\$1.34
Program Income – Membership Dues	\$4,782.28
Sales	\$150.00
Uncategorized Income	\$47.28
Total Income	\$9,180.90

Total Cost of Goods Sold	\$0.00
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Gross Profit	\$9,180.90
As a percentage of Total Income	100.00%

Operating Expenses	
Debert Retreat 2022	\$7,920.74
Insurance - Directors/Officers & Liability	\$1,265.00
NS Registry of Joint Stocks	\$49.85
On-Line Presence	\$256.95
Service Charges	\$19.50
Website Design	\$517.50
Total Operating Expenses	\$10,029.54

Net Profit	\$ - 848.64
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Percentage of Total Income	- 9.24%
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B.1

DEBERT RETREAT EXPENSES

Account Transactions

association of United Church Clergy

Date Range: Jan 01, 2022 to Dec 31, 2022

Accrual (Paid & Unpaid)



DATE	DESCRIPTION	DEBIT	CREDIT	BALANCE
Debert Retreat 2022				
Under: Expense > Operating Expense				
Starting Balance				\$0.00
Feb 09, 2022	Deposit to Debert Hospitality Centre	\$1,000.00		\$1,000.00
May 03, 2022	Gift Card for Prize	\$50.00		\$1,050.00
May 14, 2022	Heather Ferrier - Refund of Retreat	\$150.00		\$1,200.00
May 16, 2022	Debert Hospitality Centre	\$4,428.00		\$5,628.00
May 20, 2022	Susan MacLeod	\$200.00		\$5,828.00
May 25, 2022	Kevin Parks	\$200.00		\$6,028.00
May 25, 2022	Susan Sparks Fee through Catherine MacDonald	\$1,690.23		\$7,718.23
Jun 20, 2022	Carol Smith - Retreat Snacks	\$52.51		\$7,770.74
Jun 28, 2022	Linda Yates Retreat Refund	\$150.00		\$7,920.74
Totals and Ending Balance		\$7,920.74	\$0.00	\$7,920.74
Balance Change				\$7,920.74
Difference between starting and ending balances				

Account Transactions - association of United Church Clergy

Created on Apr 24, 2023

Date Range: Jan 01, 2022 to Dec 31, 2022

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C. PILLAR REPORTS

Advocacy, Education - C.1; Community - C.2; Education - C.3; Renewal - C.4

Advocacy Pillar AGM 2023

Education Pillar Report – AGM 2023

Lifelong learning is essential for healthy clergy. Developing our skills, awareness and learning new practices is a requirement if we are to remain competent in ministry. Finding opportunities for education which meet our needs, are cost effective and close to home can be a struggle. The association is committed to supporting professional growth through our annual regional events, practical workshops designed for your needs and a host of learning opportunities we will share with you from the wider church. (aUCC Governance Handbook)

It has been a joy to be the lead person for the aUCC Education Pillar and to work closely with the aUCC board this past year.

The Education Pillar organized a second in-person retreat at Berwick camp for Sept 2022, unfortunately, due to a variety of circumstances the number of participants registered was below the threshold we needed to make the retreat financially viable. The committee met shortly after and offered a schedule for 2023 of one-day retreats around the region as well as an overnight retreat at Berwick Camp. The first retreat day was held in Cole Harbour Woodside United Church in January with more than 20 participants registered. The second retreat is scheduled for Old Barns in April.

We are planning an overnight in Berwick in September around the theme of pilgrimage with Matthew Anderson, the director of Camino Nova Scotia as our guest. There will be a one-day retreat in the Port Hawkesbury area in November. It is still too early to tell if these opportunities to gather will meet the identified needs of clergy for places of connection and spiritual refreshment, however, we are hopeful that those who choose to participate will find them worthwhile. We plan to follow a similar pattern in 2024 with hopes to hold a retreat day in the southern part of the province. The work that John Wray has done to promote these events has been pivotal in their success.

My thanks to Michael Mugford, Shelley Pick, Lori Crocker, and Phillip Kennedy for all their work. We would welcome other people interested in this work to join us in the future.

Sincerely,

Susan MacAlpine-Gillis

Community Pillar Report - AGN 2023

As clergy we often experience a deep loneliness within our callings. While we know we are not alone, we can feel like we are walking a lonely road – often working in almost empty buildings, sometimes with little or no support (staff or otherwise), taking on the cares and concerns of our congregants and communities while having few outlets for our own fears. The association is your sanctuary. We understand that as people of faith we were created to be in community. The Community Pillar seeks to identify and offer a variety of opportunities and resources for connection with colleagues for support, conversation, specially focussed small groups on needs as well as providing fellowship and community building. We are not alone, and the Community Pillar lives out that care. (aUCC Governance Handbook)

Since the beginning of the aUCC, our pillar in particular has been concerned with the effects of the pandemic on the overall health and well being of clergy. In reality, the pandemic has been - in addition to the ongoing effects of institutional decline, ie precarious and part employment - becoming more and more of an issue.

One of the most important achievements of the past year for the association has been the decision to have a chaplain to meet the needs of clergy for support during these challenging times. We have been fortunate in the past year to have engaged a person for this position on a volunteer basis, namely the Reverend Gloria Churchill. Since the fall of 2022, Gloria has been responding to clergy through a variety of avenues, emails, phone calls, and personal visits. We are thankful for Gloria and the years of experience she brings to this ministry.

Our pillar has worked in conjunction with the other pillars on a number of other initiatives which you will read about in their reports, especially the advocacy pillar and the education pillar. The proposal to the region regarding Cluster Animation is one initiative that if acted upon would establish a structure for connecting clergy with one another and with lay leaders across Region 15.

One goal of the upcoming year is be more active in the organization of regional retreats. We need volunteers to make this happen and so we are seeking to recruit clergy who would be able to join this pillar and bring with them ideas for regional gatherings.

It has been a privilege to serve on the Board of the aUCC. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Smith

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Renewal Pillar Team Report - AGM 2023

Clergy are by nature and by calling, care-givers in the name of Christ. As “givers” we need regular opportunities to be renewed in mind, body, and spirit in order to be effective in ministry. We continue to live in a time of huge upheaval within our church and society and it is critical that we create moments for renewal. This Pillar seeks to provide opportunities and resources for clergy to find a place and space to be re-created, to grow spiritually and be able to engage in ministry with renewed hope, love and health. (aUCC Governance Handbook)

On Sunday, May 15 to Monday, the 16th, at least two members of the Renewal Pillar Team were to attend the aUCC retreat at the Debert Hospitality Centre in Debert. We organized the worship times and were to lead them. However, I was unable to attend at the last minute as I was dealing with a blood infection in my right hand and had to remain at home. My thanks to Mike Henderson who took my place to lead our worship times in Debert and my thanks to others who were involved in helping out.

I was unable to attend the fall retreat at Berwick Camp that was booked for September 25 to 27 as my husband and I were moving my parents from Ontario to Nova Scotia. I had contacted Rev. Bethe Benjamin Cameron to be our Renewal Pillar speaker and she was happy to accommodate. However, we did not get enough people signed up for the retreat and it had to be cancelled. As it turned out, the retreat would have been cancelled anyway due to Hurricane Fiona.

Throughout the year, as Renewal Pillar Lead, I attended our monthly aUCC Board meetings by Zoom. Looking ahead, we are seeking ways to refresh the Renewal Pillar Team and are hoping new members will join us to offer their support and ideas.

Respectively submitted,

Rev. Mary Lynne Whyte

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D. COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP REPORT - AGM 2023

John Wray

Communications

The primary focus of my work in communications is to help promote the work of the aUCC board. The majority of the work in the past year has been to help promote and manage events that have been priorities for the board.

In 2022 especially we have significantly ramped up the work of in-person events including a retreat and educational events. Work for these events includes communicating with event organizers, setting up and managing registrations on Eventbrite and developing communications strategies for the event through regular communications.

Among the other work that was done with communications this year was helping to manage and post on the aUCC Facebook page, communicating the advocacy work of the board, and developing other content to be sent out to membership.

Because of my back-end knowledge of the the website, membership management has fallen into my role. Membership went through a big change this year, partly due to technological limitations. Rather than having one membership drive a year, as was originally the plan, we moved to a rolling membership model. The advantage to this is that it is easy for anyone to join at any time, but marketing of the memberships becomes more challenging.

Membership

As of writing, membership in the aUCC stands at 36. Often as organizations get started, interest is high and so is reflected in higher membership numbers. In subsequent years, renewing membership is not something you can take for granted and must be actively pursued. There is a lot of room to grow here and I will make sure to make growing membership a top priority of the communication portfolio.

E. PROPOSALS TO REGION 15

Clusters E.1 -E.2

Congregational Designated Ministers . E.3 - E.4

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PROPOSAL REGION 15: CLUSTER AND NETWORK SUPPORT
DRAFT: Submitted February 28, 2023

Origin: Region 15

Moved by Betsy Hogan, Seconded by Shannon MacLean

1. Background

2. Proposal

3. Implications

1. Background

At the heart of our Church's continued commitment to the vitality of local communities of faith following our shift to the Three Council model was an expressed intent to nurture the creation of *clusters and networks*. These clusters and networks would connect communities of faith and individuals as "communities of common interest, mission, and support" and were expected to be "organically formed" (Remit 1: Three Council Model, 2016).

In Fall 2017, General Council Executive provided our Church more detailed definitions for clusters and networks, and more clarity about their provenance and place in our common life. In brief:

- Clusters: local clusters of communities of faith that would provide community and support for communities of faith and their leaders, and focus on worship, mission, learning, collegiality, and strategic planning
- Networks: linking people working on specific issues (e.g., supportive housing, intercultural ministry, youth ministry) or for project work (e.g., event planning) that function through the whole church, depending on the issue
- Both are to be encouraged, supported, and resourced (as requested and as is possible) by Church councils or local bodies, but their meaning and responsibility are not to be defined by Church councils or local bodies. (GCE: Clarity on Clusters and Networks, Nov 2017)

In Fall 2018, the Cluster Task Group of Maritime Conference Executive made its final report outlining expectations for the creation of clusters and networks in our regions. In brief:

- Establishing clusters and networks is to be "initiated and carried out by local communities of faith". While the Regional Minister and Regional Staff may be supportive resources to this work, their duties do not include establishing clusters and networks.
- Noting that "many are interested in clusters and networks but need some help to transition into these new forms of being connected," the Task Group registered its hope that "there might be assistance... for those who desire to move into supportive clusters and networks, yet need help in doing so." (MarCon: Cluster Task Group, Sept 2018)

Finally, our Region 15 Governance Handbook includes "developing opportunities for clusters and networks" in the duties of our four Divisions and their Committees, insofar as these are "necessary for the functioning of the Committee/Division". (Region 15: Governance Handbook v2, 2021)

Notwithstanding all the above, we are concerned that few if any clusters and networks have arisen organically in Region 15, and that this is limiting our health and capacity for faithful mission and service at the local level. While we recognize that this represents our failure at the local level to engage the cluster and network process as the expansive opportunity it provides, we also recognize that the energy to remedy this failure doesn't seem to exist.

2. Therefore

We believe that the Spirit is urgently calling us to respond to this issue by:

1. Establishing paid leadership for Cluster Animation in Region 15
2. Requesting that this animation begin with the establishment of some basic regional clusters to help us reconnect.

We ask that Region 15 create a Task Group to

1. Prepare a job description for a part-time and term-limited Cluster Animation position, which would include establishment of basic regional clusters.
2. Secure a grant or other funding for this position.
3. Hire to fill this position.

3. Staffing/Financial Implications

1. While it would be pleasing to imagine that the above could occur with minimal incursions on the work of our Regional Minister and other Regional Staff, we recognize that this is unlikely, but hope that this version of a 'pastoral relations process' might be able to unfold largely via a *volunteer* Task Group.
2. It would also be pleasing to imagine that the work of a Cluster Animation person might be funded by one of our national grant programs, but we recognize that this position may also require regional funding.

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PROPOSAL REGION 15: RECONSIDER DECISION REGARDING CONGREGATIONAL DESIGNATED MINISTERS' ROLE IN LOCAL COUNCIL

Origin: Region 15

Moved by Ross Bartlett, Seconded by Carol Smith

1. What is the issue?

The General Council decision to alter the possible parameters of Congregationally Designated Ministers (CDM) employment leaves considerable ambiguity about the scope of practice being considered. The revisions raise significant concerns for the well-being and unity of the church and should either be withdrawn or significantly clarified.

2. Why is this issue important?

In its meeting of November 2022, the General Council Executive (acting on the decision of GC44) amended the *Manual* section regarding the employment of CDMs (I.1.11.4) by adding the following (changes are underlined):

a) the person must be a baptized Christian and, if that person is the primary individual leading worship, the person must be a full member of the United Church;

and

d) either there must also be a member of the order of ministry or a designated lay minister called or appointed to the community of faith or the regional council must ensure there is adequate and appropriate support and oversight of the ministry.

While recognizing the shortage of ministry personnel and supporting innovative approaches in local leadership, the criteria for CDM appointment do not include training in doctrine, polity, and/or leadership. While within the bounds of accepted understandings of polity, the changes made by the General Council (which led to this action of the GCE) pose significant challenges to the unity and well-being of the church at large and, potentially, to communities of faith. For instance, the changes appear to open the possibility of a CDM to effectively be considered as ministry personnel for purposes of quorum in meetings of the Community of Faith Council. By contrast, candidates in ministry placements are required to have both Educational and Pastoral Charge supervisors and we have concerns that the somewhat vague language of “adequate and appropriate support and oversight” as determined by the Region opens the possibility of widely differing standards across Regions and the Church. We have experiences of Communities of Faith retaining leadership that, while nominally “United Church” demonstrates convictions and actions at odds with the ethos of the denomination and we are concerned for what liability (legal, spiritual, and moral) the church might be taking on with this change. Finally, our understanding is that the insurance coverage that applies to ordered clergy and others in regular calls/appointments may not apply to these individuals, placing them and the church at risk. As CDM position descriptions must be approved by the Region, both Regions and Communities of Faith would be assisted by greater clarity in this section.

3. How might the General Council or the General Council Executive respond to the issue?

Name a possible response that the GC / GCE might consider:

A. Action on the issue. This could include:

- **Region 15 Council Annual Meeting** direct the Executive Minister, in consultation with appropriate staff and committees, to develop a policy/strategy to clarify the Region’s response to this Manual change, **and**
- **If the GCE or GC elect not to reconsider revising the section**, direct the Executive Minister, in consultation with appropriate staff and committees, to develop a definition and parameters for “adequate and appropriate support and oversight of the ministry” within Region 15

AND

Transmit the proposal to the General Council

- **The GC could revisit the decision of GC44 to expand the role of CDMs**

OR

- **The GC or GCE could amend I.1.11.4 d** by providing a more fulsome and complete definition of the terms adequate and appropriate support and oversight of the ministry”, perhaps in terms of existing standards of supervision for candidate appointments

OR

- **The GCE could provide a** more complete discussion of the proposal and possible impacts to the Regions and Local Councils, along with advice on implementing “adequate and appropriate support and oversight.”
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4. What will be the impact?

The impact of undertaking this change addresses aspects of risk to which the Manual revision adopted by the GCE exposes individuals and the church. It allows for continued discussion of the impact of different forms of leadership in living out the Strategic Plan

5. How does this proposal help us live into the commitments on equity?

Equity in leadership requires responsible consideration of the risks to which we may be exposing communities and church membership in the absence of appropriate equipping and mentoring.

6. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council or the General Council Executive:

Are there comments, affirmations, suggestions you would like to make with respect to this proposal?

If this proposal is in response to previous work – either from General Council or a previous GCE meeting, please list proposal / motion numbers.

GC44: Section A of GCE06 (Better Supporting Rural and Smaller Communities of Faith)

GCE: Way Forward 16 v. 2: GCE06 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 2020’s) November 2022