

Pacific Mountain Regional Council

Executive Accountability Report June 2021

On behalf of the Executive of the Pacific Mountain Regional Council it is my privilege to bring you this written report on the activities of the executive since we met together in October 2020. Not only is it my privilege, according to policies outlined in our Policies Handbook, it is our responsibility to report to the General Meeting of Pacific Mountain Region, following all the appropriate requirements of The Manual. It is our responsibility to inform Communities of Faith and ministries of The United Church of Canada within the bounds of Pacific Mountain Region of our work through formal channels and informal communications.

How I wish I could take time during the meeting to report to you in person – there is much good news and good work to share. However, this written report will need to suffice. We have chosen instead to comply with another requirement of the policies by listening to the ownership. “Ownership” is governance-speak for you, the people of the region to whom we are accountable, for whom we exist to serve and support. And we have chosen to listen to you on the vital, agenda shaping matter of reconciliation.

Actions on Ministry Priorities:

Having reviewed your comments from our last general meeting, the Executive discerned three mission/ministry priorities to which the region will focus its attention and allocate resources. This does not eliminate other necessary and core work as mandated by the United Church of Canada. It does encourage every action or decision to be filtered through the lens of these priorities asking the question: how does what we are doing, align with the region’s priorities? I reiterate here what was shared on the PMRC website and report on our progress.

1. Identity: Reconciling, Affirming, Anti-Racist

The Pacific Mountain Regional Council has already made significant steps in re-shaping the identity of the denomination within its bounds.

Reconciliation

We share in the work begun with an apology to the first peoples of our region in 1986 - continuing the identity shifting work of reconciliation in response to the Calls to the Church in the Truth and Reconciliation commission Calls to Action. This is a significant priority for region, reflected throughout the other priorities we have identified. The region has allocated significant program resources to this ongoing work.

More specifically, in direct response to the far-reaching consequences of our involvement in residential schools, which have a direct link to the work of the Mission at First United in Vancouver’s downtown eastside, the Region has contributed substantial financial resources and property to First Forward: Building Connections Capital Campaign.

Anti-racism

We have developed policy stating we would be an anti-racist regional council.

Affirming Ministry

We have decided to follow a process to discern the decision to become an Affirming Ministry of the denomination.

We are dealing with two of these three priorities at this meeting:

- in light of the news from Kamloops, and having received two proposals from Alberni Valley United Church, we are allocating the accountability reporting time to listening to you about what you think our next steps should be.
- having pursued a number of initiatives in a process of discernment, we will hear from you on the question of becoming an Affirming Ministry of the United Church of Canada.

2. Healthy Communities of Faith

The Executive has come to believe that when communities of faith are healthy, the whole church is healthy. Communities of faith and congregations are the place where our identity as a reconciling, affirming, and anti-racist church is lived out. Communities of faith and congregations are where our response to an encounter with the living Christ is practiced regularly – in worship, in prayer, in scripture study, in justice making and mending the world, in whole life stewardship.

- Treena Duncan, Executive Minister has chosen to activate this priority through the Communities of Faith Council. Work continues by volunteers and staff on this functional area with a particular attention to the matter of covenant relationship.

And, because we also recognize that leaders play an important role in Communities of Faith, we will continue to invest in, and support Leadership development work in the Region.

- You will have seen a number of Leadershift initiatives that have been offered directly through the lens of these three ministry priorities. The intention is to have healthy communities of faith and ministries, led by leaders of excellence.

3. First Third Ministry

The denomination's age demographic is weighted heavily in the Baby Boomer and older age groups. In this reality, there is no substantive succession plan in all aspects of church life, threatening the church's call to proclaim the gospel as we understand it. The denomination's lack of attention and focus on the first third demographic is systemic, from early childhood development, through discipleship formation, through ministry leadership development.

- This priority has received the greatest attention since we last met. Significant resources have been allocated for staffing and program development. If you participated in the Town Hall gatherings in the first quarter of 2021, you will have heard the detail of this work from Pamela Evens and Mary Nichol. Policy revisions are taking place to fully reflect this priority within the governance of the region.

Other Initiatives

Justice Portfolio

The Executive heard the outcome of the Justice consultation by Janet Grey and approved the recommendation of Treena Duncan to fill a half-time vacancy, and to name racial justice and climate justice as initial priorities.

Regional Restructuring

Following an amalgamation decision by Rundle Memorial United Church in Banff and Canmore United Church, national church oversight of Banff returns to the Chinook Winds Region.

Governance

Strategic Planning

Through the last months of 2020, Executive Minister Treena Duncan has provided to the Executive a detailed ministry operational plan. Treena has provided us with clear descriptions of the how core work of the region connects to program and ministry work in a complex, interconnected system. It is the most comprehensive picture of how the region functions setting the groundwork for the Executive to take the next steps in governance leadership.

Working closely with consultant Dan Hotchkiss, the executive is working toward an annualized planning process that leads to regularly-stated (annual or biannual) visions for ministry to which the comprehensive system can respond.

Succession Planning

The Executive has discerned the need for a standing committee on governance to work closely with the nominating committee to build governance capacity into the function of the executive. This committee will engage in ongoing succession planning, leadership development and formation. More discernment on this committee is required by we will recommend changes to the role of president based on this discernment.

Governance, group dynamics and process, effective communication are core competencies of the president. Together with the Executive Minister, a key component of the role of President is to oversee the development of Governance capacity within the executive.

Furthermore, to introduce the concept of staggered terms of leadership on the Executive, the terms of reference for PMRC Executive have been amended to read:

Executive Members are eligible to serve two consecutive three-year terms.

The PMRC meets annually.

The agenda of each PMRC ANNUAL GENERAL meeting includes an election of members to the executive, for a three-year term. No more than 1/3 of the executive is elected each year.

Because the current membership of the PMRC executive was elected for a three-year term in 2019, the following process implements the notion of staggered terms next year.

1/3 of the existing Executive ends their term in 2022 – eligible for an additional 3 year term

1/3 of the existing Executive is elected for an additional 1 year term 2023 – not eligible for a subsequent three-year term

1/3 of the existing Executive is elected for an additional 2 year term 2024 - not eligible for a subsequent three-year term.

Ibi Chuan was elected to the Executive at the 2nd General Meeting in October 2022. He is elected for a three year term.

Before I conclude this report, I would be remiss not to express the love and appreciation of the whole Pacific Mountain Regional Council and the Executive for the unfailing servant leadership of our Executive Minister Treena Duncan. She has brought to the role, a passionate love for the church, an unwavering commitment to the mission of the region, particularly to the work of Reconciliation, and a remarkable non-anxious presence to everything that ‘freaks out’ the rest of us. Our heartfelt appreciation is extended to all the staff of the Pacific Mountain Regional Council. We are better because we are so well served.

This concludes the Executive Accountability report. We look forward to fielding your questions in writing.

Respectfully Submitted

Rev. S. Blair Odney
President