

Living Into the New Structures of Our Regional Council Feedback from the 28 May 22 AGM Presentation



Prepared by Rev Dr Peter Bartlett, EORC Minister Supporting Visioning
For EORC Fall Meeting, 5 November 2022

The Five Elements of our EOORC Living Mission are:

- **Supporting and enhancing the ministry of Communities of Faith;**
- **Supporting Ministry Personnel, Staff and Lay Leadership in Communities of Faith;**
- **Supporting and nurturing Right Relations, Social, and Ecological Justice;**
- **Supporting persons in all seasons of life; and**
- **Supporting and building Communications**

Breakout Feedback

- **15 Breakout Rooms**
- **11 Pages of Feedback**
- **~100 Comments (Collated and Categorized)**
- **Findings**
 - **Question 1**
 - **Restructuring Outcomes (55)**
 - **Communication (21)**
 - **Visioning (15)**
 - **Question 2 - Living Mission (4)**
 - **"Orphan" Comments (4)**
- **Preliminary Analysis**
- **Recommendations**



Breakout Questions

Question 1: Thinking in terms of abundance and scarcity what has your experience of the transition into, “networks, clusters, and groups” been like? Please share your examples.

Question 2: Do you feel that we are living into our Mission? What recommendations do you have?

Findings

Question 1: Restructuring Outcomes

Separation/Isolation

"The bottom line being that because Covid hit right when being the Regional Council was so new, we are further away from each other as communities of faith in terms of connecting and cooperating. As well, the courts of the church seem further away."

"Now that gatherings are beginning to be possible, churches need to take the initiative to invite (RC Leadership and Staff) to speak, not just to them, but to invite neighbouring churches. Potentially the making of a cluster; not for decision-making but for conversation, support, relationship, brain-storming, which is not easily accomplished on zoom, especially where Internet is poor."

Change Challenge

"Leaving the familiar, leaving the secure, not knowing what's next."

"I see a lot of bravery and jumping in, to live an authentic life. This feeds off their commitment to social justice. But they don't seem to be worried about thinking of where God is in this. Is our struggle in our fear? Our fear of taking the next step."

"We need to step up to change, or die. We need enthusiastic regional members to engage their congregations and help them move forward to the world in which we live. The church won't last if we continue to make it like it has always been."

Clusters Networks and Groups

- ***18 Examples of success involving numerous CoF and individuals; both Clergy and Lay.***
- ***5 Proposals for new groupings, already, or to be, resourced by EOORC Leadership.***

"Love the freedom to create a network, to find people across EOOORC who want to participate. Really appreciate the support from EOOORC Exec to include excellent staff resource people for network development... they continue to meet and provide leadership; responsive to questions from CoF."

"Things not happening? Why not? Staff are facilitators, not the doers of all. Energy must come from the grass roots. What is your passion?"

Question 1: Communications Technological Realities

"Communications is challenging across the Region; people without PC/internet, cannot (be connected), older congregations are not interested in such communications"

"Sharing Regional meeting info with congregations is very important. Regional representatives have to want to connect the Region with the Congregation."

"How do you support people? Lacking (in person contact); only able to connect by phone. How can technology help? (We) need a structured forum for (communications) discussions."

"EOORC structure gives more emphasis on networking, and more options for networking, than presbytery did. We network within our communities of faith via newsletters. Would a 'super newsletter' of highlights of individual newsletters be of interest?"

Real Meets Virtual

"Ministry folks would like to see a re-institution of congregational visits by Regional folks to see how things are going, provide some connection to the Region. Consider restoring pastoral visitation, an opportunity to highlight joys and challenges"

"Timing has been an issue; just getting into the new structure, and then the pandemic hit. So it's all crashed in on us at once. New territory; desire to return to the old (in person meetings); there will probably be a balance between the digital connection and in-person connection."

Question 1: Visioning

Support

"Around small rural churches; shrinking groups struggling to vision beyond their immediate reach. There seems to be a difficulty in smaller groups/CoFs organizing and living out a vision. So a smaller church has been looking at different ways to live out their worship practice. Others are looking at "how do we look together as a multi-point charge? Work through as individual groups THEN look for resources to support the ideas we develop."

"Many places that aren't "searching" but are just "gathering". How can we rethink what we are doing/being as Church? How to effectively cast a vision and/or provide a framework for CoF's to use and explore."

"Many have trouble with change, especially from centric to divergent."

"Would like to see a 'vision' from National church."

Question 2: Living Mission

Work to Do

"Most not aware that Exec agenda is constructed to hold us accountable."

"Bit of a crap shoot."

"(commentator was a long serving E&S member)... not sure we haven't lost connections that could support students and placements... our EOORC Living Mission calls us to 'support people in all seasons of life' and to support and enhance the ministry of Communities of Faith and their ministry personnel."

"Affirm changes: leadership comes from the ministers. If they are not 'on board,' it will not go forward. Perhaps UCC needs to insist on Affirm acceptance?"

Orphan Comments

"Having the extended amount of time to chat in our group was good, as it gave us a chance to wander off-topic."

"I think it was a catharsis for many of us. A chance to get recognition for what we've done in the past, and to validate each other's experiences. To get to understand each other just a bit."

"The church needs to work less from strength, and more from modesty."

"Break out discussions at these meetings are very valuable."



Preliminary Analysis

- **Change is being experienced throughout the Regional Council in many different ways, both positively and adversely.**
 - **There are many examples of communities of faith, and individuals who have seized upon the opportunity available to them by networking, clustering and forming ad hoc groups.**
 - **Some, continue to struggle. Clearly, there is a critical leadership and supporting role for the Regional Council Executive Leadership Teams/Committees and and Staff.**

- **Communications within the regional council are a major growing edge following restructuring. A comprehensive Communications Strategy is essential.**
- **An increasing number of CoF are seeking support for visioning their futures. They want to understand processes, and resources available to support them.**

- **In my role, I have experienced a considerable uptick in my involvement with Communities of Faith across the Regional Council, since the AGM.**
- **Some Communities of Faith have explored possibilities on their own, and seek a process to connect the things they have found. Others, are wanting to begin a process and have asked me to guide them forward.**

- **As a Regional Council staff resource, I am able to bring structure to their pursuits by facilitating an intentional process, leading to decisions, and guidance toward the multitude of resources available to support those decisions EG: RC V&T, Church Extension, UCC EDGE, Kindred Works...**

- **CoF, Networks, Clusters, and Groups seek to connect their Visions with overarching denominational and Regional Council Call/Mission Statements and Visions. The EORRC Living Mission Statement is largely unknown, or, unappreciated across the Regional Council, and there currently is no EORRC Vision Statement.**



Recommendations

- **Communicate the UCCan Call, Vision and Strategy**
- **Communicate the EOOORC Living Mission**
- **Develop an EOOORC Vision Statement**
- **Dive deeper into AGM Feedback, and discern best responses to emergent themes; including follow up at the November 5th EOOORC Fall Meeting**
- **Grow the EOOORC Communication Strategy**
- **(Re) Establish in-person contact with Communities of Faith**

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