

**Executive Secretary Report to
Toronto Conference Executive
February 10, 2010**

This report covers the period from mid-November, 2009 to the end of January, 2010, and includes up-dates on items mentioned in the November 11, 2009 report to the Executive.

From p. 13 of the Toronto Conference Executive policy *Handbook*:

The Executive monitors the Executive Secretary regularly and rigorously but only against established policies.

- Are the Ends being met?
- Are the Executive Secretary Limitations being followed?

This report describes how the executive secretary is ensuring that the Ends policies are being met and how the Executive Secretary Limitations policies are being followed.

The Executive is responsible for monitoring how it is adhering to all other policies, i.e. Executive/Staff Relations and Executive Governance policies.

Executive members will need to follow the *Handbook* policy by policy to understand the comments which follow, since the comments relate directly to whether the executive secretary is in compliance with the direction given by the Executive through its policies. The executive secretary will indicate whether he is in compliance with the policies, what actions have taken place, and what actions need to be taken. The Executive will assess whether items have been missed, or whether actions taken have been acceptable.

Items marked with an asterisk (*) contain a request for discussion and/or action.

Mission/Ends policies

p. 19 – mission of Toronto Conference *

- Strengthening... to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ – in compliance;
 - a) part of Jody Maltby's work is to be the liaison with the Mission & Service Fund; as part of a supervision session, she and I discussed actions she might take in this regard; a major initiative was to convene a consultation on January 18 regarding the future of the Mission & Service Fund within Toronto Conference; the consultation began to think in terms of where we want the church to be in 15 years; a number of ideas were proposed, including such things as developing a culture of generosity, providing assistance for ministers to speak confidently about money, and finding more voices to talk about why they give to the United Church; further work on this may be done at the Presbytery level and possibly at the Conference level via Proposals to General Council
 - b) the work of Marg Walker and Paget Blaza on the proposed communication policy was extremely helpful; if approved, the policy will help to place the Conference's communication tools within a policy framework and will help guide

the content of any vehicles that are used; because I am primarily responsible for the “means” by which we live out the policies, I have decided that *Insight* will continue to be published because it fits in well with the statement that the communication strategy will “communicate information relating to the religious life of The United Church of Canada across the Conference”; *Insight’s* content will be adjusted to ensure that it follows the outlines given by the communication policy; I will want to consult with the Presbytery communication teams on how *Insight’s* content can reflect United Church life throughout the Conference.

Presbyteries continue to work on their communication strategies, including their presence on the web site.

c) planning for the annual meeting is well underway; Moderator Mardi Tindal will be present throughout the weekend and will be the speaker at the Celebration of Ministries service. Other speakers have been contacted on the overall theme of the moderator – soul, community, creation.

- Best use of human and financial resources – generally in compliance;
 - a) I have been the interim editor of *Insight* for two issues, and will continue to do so into the future; this has not been a big consumer of my time, probably 2-3 days per issue; the Conference will save approximately \$8,000;
 - b) The chair of South West Presbytery met with me to express concerns about administrative assistance; this was not a complaint about the staff. I encouraged the Presbytery to hold more meetings in the Presbytery office to provide more direct contact with the staff, and have agreed that the administrative assistant will be present for parts of Presbytery meetings. I also encouraged the staff and the Presbytery to develop and agree to follow clear timelines for distribution of material.
 - c) program staff have expressed concern that Presbyteries are not clear on their expectations for the staff; I intend to meet with each Presbytery’s governing body in the late spring to discuss future plans for staff work
 - * d) General Council has re-admitted the Conference to the funding structure for continuing education events. We had withdrawn from the funding when we established the Cedar Glen Fund, but now that it is closed, we are treated like all the other Conferences. The Conference received a cheque for \$7,800 for use in 2010. The former Cedar Glen Fund criteria would provide grants of up to \$500 per person per year; if that formula were used, we would be able to provide fewer than 16 grants. I am suggesting that we name a particular focus of learning which would qualify for learning grants, rather than offering generic grants for anything that comes to mind. A particular focus would fit in well with making the best use of our human and financial resources. I am not suggesting a focus, but feel that it should be something that could bring long-term dividends to the church at large, not just the individual and/or his/her congregation or ministry.

- Oversight and compliance – generally in compliance; see later comments about oversight of Presbyteries and Incorporated Ministries; I continue to work with the staff regarding minutes and what should be included in them; this is an on-going project which is being shaped by the lived experience of the Presbyteries

- Providing resources – in compliance;

a) the half-time program position has been filled in South West Presbytery; Susie Henderson began her work on January 4; we are now at a full staff complement

b) the Executive's action to allow under-spending to be carried forward has been a help to Presbyteries.

c) Linda Gray is on sick leave until the middle of March, following successful brain surgery; other administrative staff have stepped in to pick up pieces of her work

d) all administrative staff attended a continuing education event organized by the General Council office; they had an opportunity to meet other administrative staff from the General Council office and other Conference offices; I participated in the event by co-leading a seminar on minute-taking

e) the non-publication of the *Directory* is a sore point; repeated contact with the photo directory company has still not resulted in a finished product; as a result, some of the Presbyteries have created mini-directories;

p. 20 – compliance

- Compliance with General Council and other policies - generally in compliance; the Conference is to have a sexual abuse/harassment committee or, at a minimum, a chair of such a committee; I began a discussion on this with the personnel ministers November 12, and will continue that conversation on February 11; I expect that each Presbytery will be asked to name a person to function as the person who would be consulted regarding implementation of the policy

p. 21 – oversight: Presbyteries *

- Reports from Presbyteries – in compliance; reports will be requested in the spring of 2010; administrative staff will be in touch with the Presbytery secretaries regarding this report
- * Oversight visits – in compliance; I am hearing some concerns from both volunteers and staff about the functioning of the new Presbyteries, e.g. nominations, finances, use of staff; I am recommending that the 2010-2011 visits take place this fall, and that the Executive spend some time in April developing a questionnaire and topics to be covered in the visits
- Review of records – in compliance; at the time of writing, Mary Gooley planned to review the final two months of records of the former Presbyteries with a view to having a report ready for the February 10 meeting of the Executive

- the president, president-elect and I met with Presbytery chairs and secretaries in early December to offer appreciation for their work and to hear how things are going; the group seemed to value the meeting (the second since restructuring took place), and a third gathering is scheduled for February 12;

p. 22 – oversight: Incorporated Ministries *

- generally in compliance; minutes are being received, boards approved, permissions given as necessary, etc., and Linda Gray follows up with those Incorporated Ministries which are delinquent in adhering to the requirements
- Linda Gray and I met in December with David Martin of Hamilton Conference regarding the requirements related to being a Supervising Court; he is doing research on behalf of the General Council on how the work is being carried out; we expressed concern about the amount of time this work takes and raised questions about the meaningfulness of some of the approvals which the Conference is required to give
- I have contracted with Marni Whitaker, a former member of the corporations committee, to be an external reader of corporation by-laws; this is a very time-consuming, dull task
- * I have asked for discussion at this meeting to gain clarity on what the Executive wishes with regard to Incorporated Ministry approvals

p. 24 – interview committee *

- * not in compliance; the Conference has not named a secretary of the committee; I am recommending that the secretarial task be a staff function
- the committee met on January 27 and conducted interviews with five candidates for ordination, two for admission and two for recognition as Designated Lay Ministers; all candidates had successful interviews and their names will be brought forward to the annual meeting in May
- South West Presbytery has still not provided a full complement of 10 persons

p. 25 – settlement and pastoral relations committee

- generally in compliance; the vice-chair and the secretary are the same person
- the committee will meet with ministry candidates on March 11 as part of the transfer and settlement process
- the committee requested an Opinion from the general secretary regarding police records checks; the issue was whether the checks must be “seen” only, or whether the church is allowed to retain the check; the Opinion was received in January, allowing the church to retain the check
- the committee has requested that General Council review the requirement that ministers retained on the roll must apply on an annual basis

Executive Secretary Limitations Policies

p. 29 – general constraints

- in compliance

p. 30 – budgeting *

- * generally in compliance; the policy calls for presentation of budgets on a triennial basis; the 2009 annual meeting was provided with a three-year budget but chose to approve only one year and receive the remaining two years for information; the Executive needs to review this procedure; should a three-year budget be provided at the 2010 annual meeting?
- a preliminary end-of-year financial report is attached to this report; the major concern is that nearly \$100,000 of assessments were outstanding at the end of the year; the Conference financial administrator will be in touch with the Presbytery treasurers for follow-up; a list of congregations in arrears will be provided to the Executive; some areas of under-spending were the result of not knowing the locations of the Presbytery offices and the costs that would be associated with those offices; we'll not have a true sense of the costs until the end of 2010 when we have completed a full budget year in the new structure

p. 31 – overall financial policy

- in compliance; the Conference's auditor has been informed that this policy exists

p. 32 – protection of assets

- in compliance; the executive secretary meets with the finance and property administrator on a regular basis; the Conference's auditor has been informed that this policy exists

p. 33 – cash management

- cash available – in compliance
- four months of expenses – not in compliance; the situation is the same as described in November, i.e. the Conference has a contingency fund of approximately \$250,000; based on the budget, the figure should be approximately \$400,000; the property and assets discussion at this meeting, and the assets task group report in April should allow for compliance within 2010

p. 34 – signing officers

- in compliance

p. 35 – investment policy

- not in compliance; at the moment the Conference's investments are found at Toronto United Church Council (Cedar Glen Fund), GICs and cash; the assets task group will report in April, not at this meeting as had been hoped; depending on its recommendations, the Executive may need to review the investment policy to either change the policy or to give direction to some body which would be managing the investments

p. 36 – vendor relations

- in compliance; there have been no extraordinary post-November 1 purchases of more than \$5,000 and no new vendors who required scrutiny

p. 37 – revenues/assessments

- in compliance; the finance and property administrator sent invoices in December; somewhat later than expected because of a delay in getting statistics from the General Council office
- as mentioned earlier, the finance administrator will inform the Presbyteries regarding congregations which are in arrears

p. 38 – Presbytery finances

- in compliance; the financial statement indicates that by the end of the year Presbyteries had spent less than 25% of the block grant; this may indicate that Presbyteries may not be processing the requisitions in a timely manner; there have been some complaints that cheques are slow to arrive, but the cheques are written shortly after the requisitions arrive in the office

i:\conference\executive\general\cesreport100210.doc