

**Executive Secretary Report to  
Toronto Conference Executive  
September 1, 2010**

**This report covers the period from mid-June to the end of August, 2010, and includes up-dates on items mentioned in previous reports to the Executive.**

General preamble: From p. 1-6 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.

**Up-dates from Executive minutes**

June 9, 2010, p. 357 – New Hope non-performing mortgage: At its April meeting, the Executive approved a \$200,000 non-performing mortgage with Toronto United Church Council (TUCC) to aid the New Hope United Church financial situation. In June I was authorized to continue discussion to see if there was a way to increase the benefit to the congregation by releasing the Conference's claim to the proceeds in favour of the General Council. I attended a meeting at the end of June involving representatives from the congregation, the Presbytery, TUCC and General Council. The outcome of the meeting was that no benefit to the Conference or the congregation would result from this action. Legal counsel has registered the mortgage and included it in our Memorandum of Understanding with General Council regarding properties being held.

April 14, 2010, p. 120 – Conference assets and commitments: Included with this report is an up-date on Conference assets and commitments with accompanying notes.

April 14, 2010, p. 119 – Conference had requested that the former Presbyteries pay out any commitments they had made up to 2009. One 2009 commitment to Ina Grafton Gage Homes for \$2,500 had been missed by the former Presbytery, and was paid out in 2010, thus reducing slightly the amount of money that will go to the Presbyteries of Toronto Conference Corporation.

### **Mission/Ends policies**

p. 2-3 – mission of Toronto Conference – generally in compliance

- Strengthening... to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ – in compliance;
  - a) Mission & Service Fund – As part of its triennium planning, General Council has invited ideas and responses from across the church. One aspect of the plan is to look at alternative ways for church members and non-members to make financial donations to the church. Jody Maltby, liaison with the M&S Fund, wrote a letter based on a program staff discussion raising concerns about the potential impact on the M&S Fund; the letter was sent to General Secretary Nora Sanders, and Jody has been contacted by the General Council office to further explore the concerns that were raised.

The concerns raised in the letter were: there is a disconnect between congregations and General Council; people do not understand the work that is being done; an educational campaign is needed to encourage shared responsibility for the work of the whole church; voluntary donations to fund the administrative work of the church is inadequate, and the church should explore moving assessments to the General Council level to pay for the administrative work of the General Council, Conferences and Presbyteries; and a separate fund to support justice work, global partnerships and emergency appeals will likely lead to a decrease in direct M&S givings, thus increasing the pressure regarding administrative costs.

- b) accessibility standards – Kerrie Perry continues to work with staff from other Conferences and the General Council office to help inform congregations about provincial accessibility standards. Material will be distributed in September.
- c) annual meeting – The June Executive meeting provided feedback on the annual meeting held in Orillia, and planning for 2011 is well underway, coordinated by Marg Walker, Carol Gierak and David Allen. The meeting will have a focus on leadership with primary input from former moderator Peter Short. The meeting will include three “streams” – youth, lay and Ministry Personnel. Susie Henderson, Patty Evans and Norm Seli will coordinate each of the streams, and former Conference staff person Barbara Lloyd will help the Conference to integrate its learnings. The next planning meeting is September 22.

\*youth participation: The planners hope that each Presbytery will name up to 15 young people to participate fully in the annual meeting. There would be no

separate youth program. Naming young people will require Presbyteries to take responsibility for their care and safety including, in some cases, naming chaperones or buddies. More information on these responsibilities will emerge after the September 22 planning meeting.

\*2011 location: The planners met with the St. Paul's, Orillia planners in late June. The St. Paul's people were very enthusiastic about the positive impact the 2010 event had on their congregation and believe the congregation is open to hosting the event again. On that basis, the planners are recommending that the 2011 annual meeting be held again at St. Paul's United Church in Orillia May 27-29, subject to approval by the Church Council at St. Paul's.

\*d) moderator's visit: The moderator of the United Church visits each Conference for approximately six days, plus travel time. This year Moderator Mardi Tindal spent three of those six days at our annual meeting. In early June she attended an anniversary event honouring the ministries of diaconal ministers. In addition, she occasionally accepts invitations to other events within this Conference, e.g. attending Living Waters Presbytery's meeting at Camp Big Canoe. The president, past president and I discussed the remaining 2.5 days available for the moderator's visit, and are recommending that the Conference free up those days for other moderatorial responsibilities. We are satisfied that her presence at the annual meeting, plus the other events in which we has participated, provide a rich enough forum for many people within the Conference to receive the gifts the moderator offers.

e) licensing agreement: In June I reported that the video licence agreement available to congregations had cost the Conference a little over \$1,100. Rose Cambourne was working on a way to reduce that cost. She reports that to date we have had 36 participants sign up for this year's program and the cost to the Conference is \$327. This is an increase of 12 participants from 2009 due to increased exposure on the website as well as more publicity done through the Presbyteries.

- Best use of human and financial resources – generally in compliance;

\* a) 2012 annual meeting: Over the summer, I asked Rose Cambourne to investigate the costs of holding the annual meeting in a convention centre/hotel setting. The results are not encouraging, and confirm the work that Joan Black had done several years ago. At that time, Joan had looked at 70-100 locations. In most cases a convention centre requires food sales of \$20-25,000, and hotels often require a commitment of hotel room sales. Our recent experience is that Conference members balk at the high prices of the meals; we were able to meet the financial thresholds while at the Toronto Congress Centre by including a couple of the meals, including the banquet, as a restructuring cost. The swing in costs goes from approximately \$70,000 at St. Paul's to \$120-125,000 in a convention centre.

In light of later comments in this report regarding future Conference funding, I am asking for further discussion by the Executive. Based on that discussion, I will develop a firm proposal for presentation at the November Executive meeting.

\* scrutineers: At the 2010 meeting, staff acted as scrutineers. This was the first time we have had staff taking on this role; previously, Presbytery volunteers were sought. A question was raised in the evaluations as to whether this was an appropriate role for staff to play. I would like some discussion by the Executive on this matter.

b) staffing conversations – In late May and early June I met with all Presbyteries to have a conversation regarding staff roles and plans for the up-coming year. Following each meeting with Presbytery people, I worked with the staff to develop a work plan for 2010-2011. These plans have been shared with the Presbyteries for information or for further discussion and/or decision-making by the Presbytery.

c) staffing within Toronto Southeast Presbytery: Toronto Southeast Presbytery inherited two area ministries from the former Toronto South Presbytery. Both are short-term contracts funded through the former WoodGreen Trust. In addition, a social justice position is on the verge of being created with funding coming from a congregation within the Presbytery. I have been in conversations with the Presbytery (old and new) for a few years regarding issues of salaries and benefits, accountability, supervision and staff location. Those conversations are continuing this fall. I may have more to report in this regard in November.

- Oversight and compliance – generally in compliance
  - a) Sexual abuse policy – The personnel ministers have set 2010-2011 dates for four sexual abuse policy workshops for Ministry Personnel. That information has been communicated via the website and *Insight*, e-mails and letters.
  - b) racial justice training – Three racial justice training events have now been scheduled. That information has been communicated via the website and *Insight*, e-mails and letters.
  - c) duty of care – Susan Howard, former Conference staff conducted duty of care training sessions at the Conference camps. The training process will be reviewed for 2011.
- Providing resources – generally in compliance;
  - a) staff news – i) In April the full staff had attended a first aid training session conducted by St. John's Ambulance; as a result of that training, defibrillators will be installed in all offices in September. ii) The staff was on a retreat June 21-23 at the Five Oaks Centre. This was a good opportunity to continue building a staff

team which can make the best use of the resources that are available. A retreat is scheduled for June, 2011.

b) meetings with Presbytery chairs and secretaries – The president, past president and I will meet with Presbytery chairs and secretaries on September 23. In addition to the chairs and secretaries, Presbytery treasurers/finance representatives will meet with Rose Cambourne; and Presbytery nominations people have been invited to meet with Carol Gierak.

p. 2-4 – compliance

- Compliance with General Council and other policies - generally in compliance; see my notes, above, on the sexual abuse, racial justice and duty of care policies.

p. 2-5 – oversight: Presbyteries

- Reports from Presbyteries – in compliance for 2010; requests for the 2011 reports will go out in the early part of 2011
- Oversight visits – in compliance; at this meeting the Executive will receive an up-date on these visits
- Review of records – not in compliance; Mary Gooley has agreed to review the 2009-2010 minutes of the Presbyteries and will report in November
- Communication – in compliance
- Finances – in compliance

\*p. 2-6 – oversight: Incorporated Ministries

- generally in compliance; minutes are being received, boards approved, permissions given as necessary, etc.; the Executive will discuss a revised policy at this meeting based on discussions at the June Executive meeting

Some up-dates:

Massey Centre – A 13-week strike at Massey Centre generated some interest in the church and the wider community. The situation highlighted again the difficulty of providing effective oversight of Incorporated Ministries. On the one hand, we have responsibility for the use of the name of the denomination and we want the Incorporated Ministries to reflect United Church values, and on the other hand we respect their independence as separate legal entities and, thus, we do not interfere in day-to-day operations. I plan to attend the Massey Centre annual meeting September 15.

Bathurst Street United Church Corporation – In July I set up a meeting with representatives of the former Board and the current Board to deal with concerns related to the transfer of responsibilities from the old Board to the new one. This meeting was in response to a request for help from the former Board. However, they chose to not attend the meeting in the absence of representatives of Toronto Southeast

Presbytery. Subsequently, discussions have ensued between legal counsel for both Boards. I will raise a question with the Executive regarding legal fees; see my comments in the discussion of executive secretary limitations.

p. 2-6 – interview committee

- in compliance
- Three of the four Presbyteries have their complement of 10 persons for the 2010-2011 year
- the first meeting of the year will take place October 20

p. 2-8 – settlement and pastoral relations committee

- generally in compliance; the vice-chair and the secretary are the same person; the nominations group of the Executive will address this matter
- the committee is scheduled to meet October 28

p. 2-10 – learning funds

- in compliance; the fund has been advertised on the website and in the September/October issue of *Insight*; to date two applications have been received

### **Executive Secretary Limitations Policies**

\*p. 3-3 – general constraints

- in compliance
- re #4 – deviation from established Conference policies: While I do not believe I have deviated from established policies, four financial issues arose that required consideration and/or action in the absence of policy.

a) legal fees: As I mentioned regarding the Bathurst Street United Church Corporation, above, legal counsel has been engaged. In the absence of policy, I agreed that Conference would provide up to \$10,000 in funds, if necessary, to be repaid by the corporation. I believe the risk to the Conference is low, since all parties agree that they wish to have the situation resolved so that the Bathurst money can be used for ministry. Does the Executive wish to place restrictions on the executive secretary in this regard?

b) Holland Landing loan: Holland Landing United Church is in discussions with other congregations about its future. The initial plan is that the congregation will disband and the building will be sold. In the meantime, the congregation is in financial difficulty. The Executive of Living Waters Presbytery requested that Conference provide up to \$20,000 to the congregation, to be repaid from the sale of the property. In the absence of policy, I believe I could have made this

decision because our cash flow is good at the moment. Does the Executive wish to make a policy on this kind of request?

c) donation from Kleinburg United Church: Kleinburg United Church closed at the end of June. When the property was sold, the congregation designated a number of beneficiaries, including Northern Waters Presbytery - \$227,954.90 for general use and \$113,977.45 for youth ministry support. Northern Waters will need to make some decisions about how this money will be used. Toronto Conference also received \$75,984.96 for "Toronto Conference priorities". In all our discussions about property, we never addressed the issue of the Conference receiving donations. We need to be clear about our use of these funds.

d) WoodGreen property: See comments, below, under disposition of property.

\*p. 3-4 – budgeting

- in compliance
- re point #3: In one week over the summer I heard of four congregations that had begun discussions about amalgamating or closing. Two congregations closed at the end of June. This is not surprising, given the demographic shifts in the church. I would like the Executive to begin a discussion about the long-range implications of amalgamations/closings. There are at least three concerns that I want to raise:

staffing and structure: As our assessment base erodes, I wonder how we will pay for the staffing and structure that we have recently put in place. I don't see this as an immediate issue, but it could become one within a few years. While we live in a geographic area that provides plenty of money based on sale of property, *The Manual* is written in such a way that Conference can essentially be shut out of the cash inflow. Presbyteries have far greater ability to access financial resources, or direct them in particular areas. The advent of the new Presbyteries of Toronto Conference Corporation, combined with the property policies recently adopted by the Conference, also means that most of the money from future sales of property will be to the benefit of the Presbyteries, not the Conference. We need to plan ahead for these shifts.

Archives: As churches close and amalgamate, their records are deposited in the Archives, which means that Conference's costs are on the rise. The Conference has no ability to mandate that a portion of sales will be directed to archival costs in situations where a Presbytery has made decisions about the use of funds received. We need a longer-term joint strategy involving the Presbyteries regarding archives costs.

Sabbaticals: In accordance with General Council policy, Conference program staff are eligible for extended study leaves after serving five years in a staff position. The practice in this Conference has been that when a staff person is on extended study leave, a part-time person is hired to cover the essential work of the

portfolio. This is an extra cost beyond the normal salaries and benefits. I will begin working on a sabbatical plan for the program staff, along with costing plans, and will present this to the Executive in November or January.

- re point #8: A financial statement to the end of July is included with this report. There are no particular concerns to raise. The Conference will re-activate a Formal Hearing later this fall, so there will be some costs related to it. This hearing had been on hiatus while the respondent served jail time.

p. 3-5 – overall financial policy

- in compliance

p. 3-6 – 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. 3-7 – cash management

- cash available – in compliance
- four months of expenses – in compliance; Rose Cambourne and I met with the auditor in August to ensure that all decisions made at the April 14, 2010 Executive meeting will be implemented properly from an accounting point of view. Funds have now been allocated accordingly.

p. 3-8 – signing officers

- in compliance

\*p. 3-9 – 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; as noted, above, Rose Cambourne and I met with the auditor in August; he is of the opinion that our funds are not sufficiently substantial to require such a sophisticated investment policy
- The auditor will offer some examples of a less complex investment policy for non-profit organizations.

p. 3-10 – vendor relations

- in compliance; exterior renovations at the Living Waters Presbytery office should be complete by the end of September; the work was done by the company selected as part of the original bid process in 2009 when the office was renovated;

the bulk of the current renovation involves brickwork; our contractor sought a number of quotes

\*p. 3-11 – revenues/assessments

- in compliance; Rose Cambourne has informed the Presbyteries regarding congregations which are in arrears; Presbyteries have been following up on those concerns
- \*as of mid-May, the following amounts were still outstanding from the 2009 assessments
  - Living Waters - \$14,066.30
  - Northern Waters - \$1,000
  - South West - \$10,838.90
  - Toronto Southeast - \$3,411.25

The outstanding amounts by the end of August were:

- Living Waters - \$12,716.44
- Northern Waters - \$1,000
- South West - \$10,838.90
- Toronto Southeast - \$3,411.25

This raises a number of issues: i) Over the last four months, Presbyteries have not made much progress in this area. ii) Conference has a shortfall of nearly \$28,000 from 2009. iii) The Executive needs to discuss remedies for the situation. In the old structure, Presbyteries were responsible for collecting all assessments and when a congregation did not pay the Conference assessment, the Presbytery was responsible for the shortfall. Under the new structure, Conference does all the billing and receives the funds. Should Presbyteries be required to make up the shortfall, as was the case in the old system?

- 2010 assessments...

Presbytery	# of charges - fully paid	# of charges – no payment
Living Waters	17	6
Northern Waters	12	4
South West	7	5
Toronto Southeast	5	4

\*p. 3-12 – Presbytery finances

- generally in compliance
- Following the September 23 meeting with Presbytery treasurers/finance representatives, Rose Cambourne will provide suggested changes in the section on “general expenses and Presbytery treasurer”

\*p. 3-14 – disposition of property

- in compliance;
- \*WoodGreen property – On August 26 Rose Cambourne and I met with an agent authorized by WoodGreen Red Door Family Shelter to discuss the potential sale of the property to the shelter. Our policy would appear to give the executive secretary authorization to proceed with the sale, but I believe the Executive should discuss this more fully.
- Riverdale property – Riverdale United Church closed at the end of June, and the Conference is now managing the property on a temporary basis. Toronto Southeast Presbytery requested that the property not be sold immediately to allow time for discussion about ministry in that part of Toronto. I have agreed that the Conference will hold the property until June, 2012; by December 1, 2011, Presbytery will have a proposal in place for use of the property. Because of rental income, the property breaks even at the moment.
- Anten Mills property – The sale of the former Anten Mills United Church should be complete by the end of September. Funds received will be applied in accordance with the property policy, p. 5-23.

\* p. 3-15 – Conference Fund

- in compliance; the Fund has been set up. A request was received in June regarding support for a United Church educational institution. I am suggesting that the Executive develop criteria for responding to such requests.

p. 3-16 – communication

- generally in compliance
- I have interpreted the policy to mean that the groups to whom we communicate are General Council, Toronto Conference itself, Presbyteries, Ministries (meant to include congregations, Pastoral Charges, chaplaincies, outreach ministries, etc.), and the wider community. The form of communication will vary according to the constituency, e.g. most communication from Conference to General Council and Presbyteries will be direct communication via mail or e-mail.
- Communication vehicles will include, but not be limited to: postal mail, e-mail, website including RSS feeds, *Insight*, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Website - I met with Linda Gray and Rose Cambourne in mid-August to discuss the Conference's website. The website will focus on Toronto Conference, Ministries and the wider community. We're going to up-date the home page to make it more interesting and will reallocate content based on the intended audiences. We'll be setting up RSS feeds.
- Social media – We'll be establishing a Conference Facebook account, and a Conference Twitter account. We will not be setting up any blogs until we have developed guidelines for content. We hope that all these changes will be in place by the last two weeks of October.

- *Insight* – By the time the Executive meets, I will have met with our layout artist and a design specialist regarding a new look for *Insight*. Content will be based on the communication policy.
- Technology fund – Related to communication, the technology fund has been advertised since the end of June. To date three applications have been received and approved.

### **Executive governance policies**

I'm requesting guidance on two Executive Governance Policies.

#### **\*5-21 - nominations**

- In June I had a conversation with staff about the appointing of people to attend various General Council meetings; this arose because of their liaison responsibilities with General Council Units. From time to time the Units will hold one-time consultations on particular topics, and they'll ask for a person or persons to attend, e.g. the mission support consultation, social justice events, etc. Sometimes the persons are asked to represent the Conference, and other times it is less clear. At the present time no mechanism is in place for naming those people, and only recently did we name an ad hoc nominations group. This kind of appointment is not part of the nominations group's mandate.

How do we wish to handle this in the future? We could give this task to the nominations group. We could deal with these matters at the Executive when it meets or by Conference call. We could delegate this task to the executive secretary or to the specific staff liaisons in each area. Whatever we choose, we need to be clear what we are choosing. At the moment, the issue is very fuzzy, which has led to confusion.

#### **\*5-23 – property**

- During August I was asked a number of questions about the various elements of the policy. While attempting to answer the questions, I realized that the policy could benefit from greater clarity.

General paragraph: I'm wondering whether it would be more clear to have a preamble such as, "Conference occasionally receives assets from the sale of church property in accordance with different Sections 268, 269 and 270 of *The Manual*. Each section requires a different process at the congregation/Presbytery level before assets come to the Conference. In distributing the assets, Conference is bound by the requirements of each *Manual* section."

Surplus property: The policy would be more clear if we re-shaped this section in a manner similar to the "Presbytery requests" section. The Executive's wishes for distribution of surplus funds are not stated, and the general preamble for the

policy doesn't help. Do we want to make a contribution to the M&S Fund? to the sustainable energy fund? to maintain the Conference funds?

Presbytery requests section: #6 – Do we want to be more clear that the money is going to the Presbyteries of Toronto Conference Corporation to be distributed evenly amongst the four Presbyteries?

Donations to the Conference: The Kleinburg donation is a very welcome gift, but our policy does not provide guidance on what to do with it.

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