

Gathering Strength. Scattering Light – Open Space Technology Session
Report Form

Name of Action: Mining Justice???

Action Report # B1

Name of Champion: Kathryn Anderson

Names of those interested in assisting:

Debra Keys-White, Pat Brennan-Albert, Margaret Jennings, Linda Scherzinger, Steve Berube, Myrna Wicks, Elliott Prouty, Michael Ball, Georgina Baisley

Future Action (Goal and vision for outcome):

Get the Pension Board to respect the will of the denomination, provide timely accountability reports to Commissioners of the General Council and divest from Goldcorp and other extractive industries that harm the Creation.

Next Steps (Be specific for example set up a meeting time/place or by phone; name a specific task and deadline for completing it):

That the denomination follow through on the TRC recommendations particularly with respect to following the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People ie. the right for free, prior and informed consent.

Participate in the Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability by joining the Open for Justice Campaign.

That the Pension Plan respect the 78% vote at GC 42 by divesting from Goldcorp.

Resources Required (Who else should be invited, finances needed, barriers to be removed, other):

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TOPIC: More than Friends

Conversation Group # B2

Name of Leader: Neil McEwen & Linda Yates

Names of Participants (circulate attached list) 13

Where is this report recorded?

Computer # 2

USB Stick # 57

Emailed openspace@marconf.ca

Highlights of Discussion:

- There is a well anticipated resource
- Marriage preparation is not well understood by congregations
- How to address requirements – will couples be turned away?
- All the areas covered are excellent and well laid out
- Others modules in future: Seniors marrying, blended families, divorced people
- Discussions of the future in terms of illness and death
- Address philosophy of having children/fertility issues
- Conflict around the wedding itself

Action Ideas/Resources Required:



- Resource is too cheap
 - o Should build in capacity for reshooting in 5 years
 - o Updating regularly
 - o Distribution and promotion system

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TOPIC: Small Rural Congregations: Solutions for Financial Survival

Conversation Group # B3

Name of Leader: Tony Orlando

Names of Participants (circulate attached list) 30

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Highlights of Discussion:

CRITICAL POINTS:

- a. Fund raising must be fun
- b. Ask congregations to prayerfully consider their givings
- c. Let people know where their money is going
- d. It is not just about the money; it must also be about community outreach/building, about fellowship
- e. Dealing with and controlling burnout

What was brought up:

- Try interdenominational shared ministry
- Apple pie fund raiser: full congregational participation (only about 30 members) making about 300 pies, raising \$7,000.00. It brings out folks who don't regularly attend.
- Another one only annual fund raiser: Candle Light Turkey Dinner first Sunday after Thanksgiving. Brings in the entire community with entertainment in the community hall. 100 seats and some take out @ \$15.00 / plate
- Four fund raisers in this charge: One is Christmas Lights. UCW energy behind it. Folks buy a white lightbulb to replace a coloured light bulb on a Christmas Tree
- Another fund raiser is outreach....Farmers helping Farmers in Kenya
- Just about everyone does some fund raising for outreach. Most seems to be for buildings and salaries.
- Important to "create some juice" which means to create some energy or enthusiasm. This can be done by reaching out to and including other churches/denominations in community and emphasising the social aspect. At Advent this congregation invites all the community churches to a service to raise money for the local food bank. Using our space for community events is vital, such as hosting a spaghetti dinner for a local soccer team. How we welcome folks into our space is important, be hospitable. Do what people do together.
- This congregation did a fund raiser for the local school lunch program. Scotia Bank matched the funds raised dollar for dollar.
- Mill Stream Charge – made lasagnas for sale (family and individual servings)
- "Freedom of Information" publish or reveal what the givings are: steps chart. Let congregation know how many folks gave \$100.00, \$50.00, 25.00 etc. Talk to the

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congregation about their givings, telling them where their money goes, and asking them to prayerfully think about what they should be giving.

- **Include in the Annual Report a Steps Chart.**
- **Do a PAR campaign**
- **Churches got together to figure out how they could reduce costs and save money. They cut hours of salaried employees, cut down on heating costs.**
- **A huge concern about volunteer burnout**
- One congregation has to raise \$20,000.00 a year. Close to burn out!
- Another congregation does nine major fund raisers a year!
- Ask the congregation to free up the UCW. One UCW gets the men involved.
- Bakeless bake sale - this gets folks who don't normally or regularly attend to participate in the fund raising. This frees up the 'worn out' workers.
- One congregation does a monthly Country and Western Concert.
- Do a lobster dinner.....\$20.00 / plate
- Workers tend to be the same ones who do everything else. Try projects that do not involve only the workers.
- Hearts Tree – congregants place a heart on a tree in memory of a departed loved one
- Hip of Beef – involved everyone in the congregation, even the kids
- Breakfast offered to the congregation after the 9:00 am service. Happens once every three weeks. The event has spread out to include folks outside the congregation from the local community.
- Fund raising should not be just about the money. It should be fun and provide fellowship and be a social event. Don't exhaust your people.
- **ASK THE CONGREGATION DIRECTLY TO INCREASE THEIR GIVINGS.** Talk to them and ask them to think about their faith and their community. Tell them the truth.
- What is critical: the Steps Chart (present it annually), let people know where their money is going (narrative budget) and challenge folks to review their givings.
- "The money is there, it's just in your pocket."
- Chart showing all the fund raisers done to show how many people participated / worked, how much effort (energy) it took and how much money was raised. Able now to realize some fund raisers were not worth doing.

Action Ideas/Resources Required:



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TOPIC: Building & Selling Church Buildings

Conversation Group # B4

Name of Leader: Annika Sangster

Names of Participants (circulate attached list) - 8

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Highlights of Discussion:

- Policy and procedure on selling churches and cemeteries
- Costs of taking building down
- Benefits of future directions in urging congregations
- Checking for deeds, etc. before amalgamations
- Heritage property
- Mourning buildings
- Presbytery assigned trustees in the past not dealing with things properly
- People don't care about the future of the congregation, just the building
- Churches need to become "community centres" by partnering to deal with buildings

Action Ideas/Resources Required:



- Presbytery "travelling show" on looking forward"
- Round table discussions
- Resources on websites
- Ask all Presbyteries in Maritime Conference to set up future directions committees

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TOPIC: Ministers Under 40

Conversation Group # B5

Name of Leader: Penny Nelson

Names of Participants (circulate attached list)

Highlights of Discussion:

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-Mostly women who showed up

- gender and age compounds the struggles we face

-identified systemic discrimination towards us as being “young” with questions and statements we frequently get, such as “are you the youth minister”, “you’re too young to be the minister!” “little girl”, “the girl”, and we face the expectation that we will bring in “young people” because we’re “young”

-struggle because we have to translate our regular language that we use or interests we have (facebook, twitter, Instagram, movies and tv, etc.) into language or stories that older people will understand because we mostly minister to older people. At times, this means we don’t present our “true” selves because we feel (and know) that we will not be understood.

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Action Ideas/Resources Required:



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TOPIC: Best Practices for Church-less Congregations **Conversation Group # B6**

Are you a worshipping congregation without a church?
Are you weary of raising money to keep the church doors open?
Are you yearning for an experience of church that is beyond the building?
Are you looking for ways to free your congregation from their addiction to their building?

Name of Leader: Shawn Redden

Names of Participants (circulate attached list)

Highlights of Discussion:

We shared stories of experiences of leaving buildings, or re-purposing buildings with community partnerships, or amalgamating congregations and finding new places to worship and new ways to be “church” without ties to or responsibility for buildings.

We noticed the following characteristics/qualities in our storytelling that could be “signposts” for developing/naming some “best practices” for communities of faith to be freed from their buildings:

Worshipping in non-traditional spaces –

- deep experience of community
- different space offered an invitation to some people to join us when the barrier/baggage of a “Church” was no longer visible
- required an intentionality to create “sacred space”
- intentional hospitality
- freedom of a different space (without pews) invited experimentation in worship
- “home church” worship was more intimate, conversational, and community based

Selling buildings

- freed up resources to be devoted to mission and ministry instead of bricks and mortar
- new money / new financial resources requires a deeper conversation about our attitudes about money, how we invest, how we spend money, etc – Spiritual conversation about money/stewardship

Other characteristics noted:

- value of **fostering partnerships**
- willingness to **risk**
- **faith** that something is already happening – “Behold, I am doing a new thing...”
- vital is the spiritual practice of **discernment**
- **transparency** around decision-making
- “Looking outward/turning outward”



Action Ideas/Resources Required: We need to gather stories/best practices of other congregations who have experimented with being church without a church building. How can we connect with those stories and share them across the church?

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TOPIC: What About Gretta?? (Vosper)

Conversation Group # B8

Host: Joanne McFadden

How can an Atheist be a part of United Church of Canada?

How can our Church live without somebody who is inviting us into a new way of thinking?

How as a Church can we respond to people whose theologies are different from ours?

Initial thoughts:

Gretta experienced as an open, caring person.

This situation offers an opportunity for us to be pushed.

Talking stick invited into group. Group dynamic in agreement for open dialogue.

Why are you here? (Thoughts and positions from group.)

1. Is there a process in place to change current conditions that uphold and the Ordained? What if an Ordained person deviates from current expectations/conditions?
2. Can we think/reflect/consider the ideas being introduced by Gretta's current theological stand?
3. Is Atheist the appropriate term to be using and do we fully understand its ramifications? Is this a theistic issue? Is Divinity in question?
4. I believe Gretta has stated in her writings, she is an Atheist. What is Gretta's Christology?
5. The publicity of the situation, including Gretta's participation is impacting the United Church without offering the Church an opportunity to be included and respond.
6. The United Church is tainted by the situation.
7. I believe Gretta is in Essential Agreement with United Church Policy. If you believe in Love, you believe in God. Love is God. Let her Congregation decide her outcome.
8. 30 - 40 percent of people do not prescribe to a theistic God, according to a recent survey.
9. Let's be pushed. As an Affirming Conference, does that also include different theological positions?
10. To claim oneself as an Atheist and be a member of Clergy for the United Church of Canada, does not marry well.
11. Do we need stronger, basic clarity in what the United Church of Canada believes?
12. Does language influence our believe? Is a community celebrating/worshipping sacredness without God language, any less holy?
13. Is there a place for me and my spirituality in the United Church?
14. If Gretta is on 'trial', in regards to being in "Essential Agreement" perhaps many of us are as well.
15. Faith is an evolving experience. I celebrate evolution. I celebrate Gretta. Let's be careful and wise and continue to be an open and evolving Faith Community.
16. Why are we not supporting her?
17. Theology and Faith Committee at General Council had a proposal brought forward to discuss the "Essential Agreement" question. Proposal was turned down.
18. 90 percent of my congregation believe in a personal deity...50 percent in the virgin birth.
19. We are ready to Change.
20. How important is it for me to believe in everything literally? Do we need to go to church on Sunday? We are continuing to evolve and change.

Closing:

Group size suggests a need for further conversation. (Approximately 45) Big thanks from all!

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TOPIC:
AFFIRMING MINISTRY
NEXT STEPS FOR CONGREGATIONS

Conversation Group #__B10__

Name of Leader: Bob Johnson

Names of Participants (circulate attached list)

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Highlights of Discussion:

We discussed the required steps as outlined in "Open Hearts" – page 8.

Action Ideas/Resources Required:



There is interest is this information being offered again ... and again.

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TOPIC: **Governance as Spiritual Practice**

Conversation Group #_B11

Name of Leader: Catherine Smith

Names of Participants (circulate attached list)

Highlights of Discussion:

This conversation was based on a governance model that was developed with and in use by Sackville United Church. It grew out of Catherine's longing to see a model that melded faith formation and the regular administrative and management functions of governance.

There are two core principles

Faith formation is at the heart of all we do as Christian Community and that the practice of faith formation needs to be engaged by its core leadership group,, informing their decisions and enlivening their encouragement of the life and ministry of the congregation. This is best done by having those who provide eldership present to and involved in the decision-making and regular governance of the congregation.

Leadership needs to be encouraged in all areas of the congregation from the newly forming edges and its more established places. The way of offering leadership needs to be made easily accessible. One does not need to learn all the details of a committee structure to offer leadership. There is simplicity and fluidity. This encourages liveliness throughout the body.

This shape/model is supple and responsive to context; it is whole-hearted and organic. This model shifts congregational culture.

Even in ways that may seem tiny and at times tenuous, the most lively and amazing things can happen in this model, like a small pebble dropped in the waters of our conversations about change.

From this conversation a list is growing of people who have requested information on the development and use of this model. A package is being developed and can be sent to anyone who is interested. Please speak to Catherine if you are interested.

Catherine is also willing to speak about this model.

Action Ideas/Resources Required:



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TOPIC: Bermuda Conference Cruise

Conversation Group # B12

Name of Leader: Gary Clark

Names of Participants (circulate attached list)

15 Participants

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Emailed openspace@marconf.ca

Highlights of Discussion:


ADVANTAGES

- More involvement from Bermuda Reps
- Savings on airfares from Bermuda delegates
- Savings in future years used to assist others restricted financially
- Delegates bring families
- Other organizations that use cruise time as con ed
- More community building opportunities/spiritual experience
- Use of technology
- Commitment from delegates
- Ordinand potentially ordained in Bermuda

DISADVANTAGES

- Time/expenses/space for youth programs
- Late May for youth exams
- Cost/logistics
- Would enough delegates participate

Action Ideas/Resources Required:

-  - Executive set-up a task group to cost out such and exciting adventure for Conference, especially Bermuda

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TOPIC: **One order of Ministry**

Conversation Group # B13

Led by Lori Crocker. Scribe: Kent Gibbons

Name of Leader: **Lori Crocker**

Names of Participants (circulate attached list) **20**

Highlights of Discussion:

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- Not everyone has the same gifts.
- Question of why do an M.Div. if someone with less ed. Is going to be ordained.
- People need to follow where they're being led by the Spirit.
- We're all jacks of all trades
- Is it such a big problem for a diaconal minister or a DLM to "explain themselves"?
- There is a diaconal tradition worldwide. Will this tradition die?
- Rather than 1 order, may need deeper discussion re educational training
- Still an issue that diaconals don't have master's degrees.
- Need an educational video explaining diaconal ministry
- Check out ducc.ca

Action Ideas/Resources Required:



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TOPIC: Exploring Visions, Ideas, Options for Tatamagouche Centre
Conversation Group # A12 & B14

Please see A12 for report.

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Topic: Funding For Retired Clergy to Come to Conference **Conversation # 17B**

Name of Action: Create a discounted fee for Retired Clergy (like a senior's discount)

Name of Champion: Krista Anderson and Brian DeLong

Names of those interested in assisting:

Future Action (Goal and vision for outcome):

Seek pathway for bringing this to the Maritime Conference. (Proposal, letter to executive or MC planning?)

Explore if there are there bequests that we can tap into and also how to we promote this?

Suggest a 50% discount on room and meal costs. (i.e. add to the registration form?)

Could this be a chasing the spirit new ministry initiative – insure mentors are present at MC for wisdom – Honour our Elders?

Next Steps (Be specific for example set up a meeting time/place or by phone; name a specific task and deadline for completing it):

Does this fit in the pension convener role – funding budget for this position.

Addressed before next Maritime Conference

Note: this conversation expanded to other issues of retirees – how pensioners are feeling about being abandoned, how we express to them our value and express the need we have for their participation in the life of our church. Recognition of years and celebration of retirement is not enough. Not all presbyteries have pension convenors, If retirees do have issues with pension and medicare, what can we do besides write it in a report? Is there a fund we can tap into to help with medical issues or augment those in financial trouble. I.e. Eye benefits are not covered and as we age our eyes get worse. Could we cover costs for retirees . Many fall through the cracks, i.e. housing of those who lived with manse and now need to buy houses without equity. Could we cover the cost of them being trained to be education supervisors or interim ministers. Can we set up a mentorship or spiritual advisor partnerships for new ministers? MC is a chance to reconnect and fellowship for ministers, without being able to come, those who want to might feel more isolation.

Resources Required (Who else should be invited, finances needed, barriers to be removed, other):

Benefit of wisdom outweighs the costs... possibly use a survey to poll retired ministers as to the barriers that require addressing.

Need # of retired ministers in conference. What % of retired ministers actually attend MC? What % of retired ministers want to come to MC?

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TOPIC: UCW ?

Conversation Group # __B19__

Name of Leader: Corina Bolo (PEI)

Names of Participants (circulate attached list)

21 participants

Highlights of Discussion:

Key Themes (with related comments)

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- 1) Rich History
 - a. Ages, often over 70
 - b. Grandmothers and mothers had been members
 - c. Is it “a woman’s place” as in earlier times?; women can serve in other ways now
 - d. Fellowship for women no matter the ages or number of members


- 2) A Ministry of Service (that needs to be recognized)
 - a. UCW giving is a line item in the church budget in some cases
 - b. Pastoral care, not just crafts and sewing and food
 - c. Their services have been “branched off” to other groups; some OK with that but some feel their “reason to be” is taken
 - d. Make a list of accomplishments/services/projects/fundraising done by UCW so people are aware of what’s done
 - e. Much “outside the church” fellowship to maintain contact (with senior members)
 - f. Some had a church service just to recognize the UCW work and make the congregation aware of their service

- 3) Reaching Out to the Whole Congregation
 - a. Many donate without the commitment to UCW as a group
 - b. Men helpers support UCW; people working together

- 4) Re-invention
 - a. Groups are re-inventing to meet the needs of their members and their particular church
 - b. Women decide what they need
 - c. Re-invent the groups for the times and ages of members
 - d. May have a different name (other than UCW)
 - e. Each group meets the needs of their own area

- 5) UCW !

Action Ideas/Resources Required:

 There is interest in this information being offered again ... and again.

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Topic: Beyond Sponsorship

Conversation # B20

Interest in connecting to gov't sponsored refugees to provide support. Frustration that the majority of refugees who have come are gov't sponsored and don't have community support while hundreds and hundreds of churches and community groups wait for their families.

Concern about the focus on Syrian Refugees to the detriment of support for refugees from other countries.

Is giving \$\$ to world food programme still a good idea?

Concern about the gov't sponsored refugees that have arrived and have no support.

We have raised a pile of money and can spend it all on our refugee family, how could we use the money?

A lot of brainstorming about building partnerships with churches, schools, theological colleges, etc. in the middle east and discussion about how to make this happen.

Discussion of the ways that this work is opening up Christian Muslim dialogue. Summerside has opened a Mosque in their church!

Trinity United in New Glasgow has supported a family, moved a second family from Alberta, and is building strong relations with Muslims.

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TOPIC: Part time ministry does it even exist?

Conversation Group # 21B

Name of Leader: Doreen Daley

Names of Participants (circulate attached list) 13 people

Highlights of Discussion:

Part time ministry needs to be carefully monitored

There could be an ethical issue with part time ministry positions that have the expectations that the minister be in the pulpit every Sunday.

For example if ministry position is $\frac{3}{4}$ time – minister should be in pulpit 3 Sundays a month

If ministry position is $\frac{1}{2}$ time – minister should be in pulpit 2 Sundays a month

If the position was full time and then becomes part time – the congregation still has full time expectations of the ministry.

Lay people need to step-up with the work load – need for an active pastoral care team

When the JNAC is being processed – ask members of the congregation how they will compensate for overtime worked by the minister personnel.

Need to follow the JNAC or job description very carefully – M & P Committee needs to be accountable.

Congregation needs to be very aware of what is in the JNAC or job description.

Once congregation realizes how difficult to have part time ministry – they may decide they really need full time ministry instead

Action Ideas/Resources Required:

$\frac{3}{4}$ time might work best – if ministry personnel works full time for 9 months and has 3 months off – vacation and study leave would still be monitored during those 9 months.

Co-operative and Cluster Ministry is working quite well in some areas of the Maritime Conference.



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